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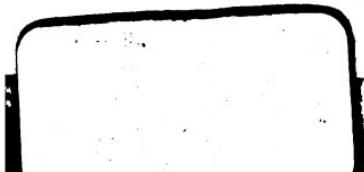
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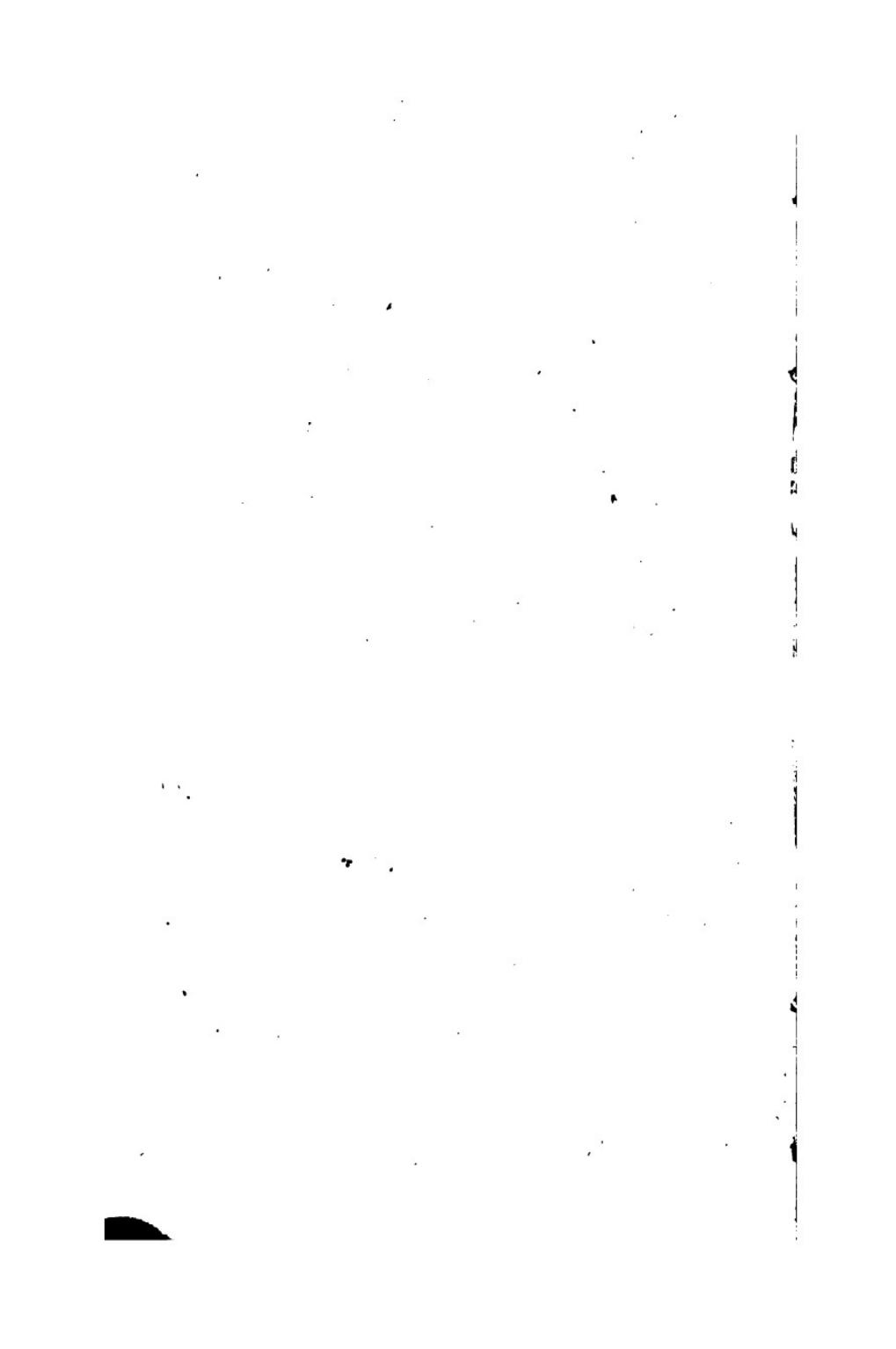
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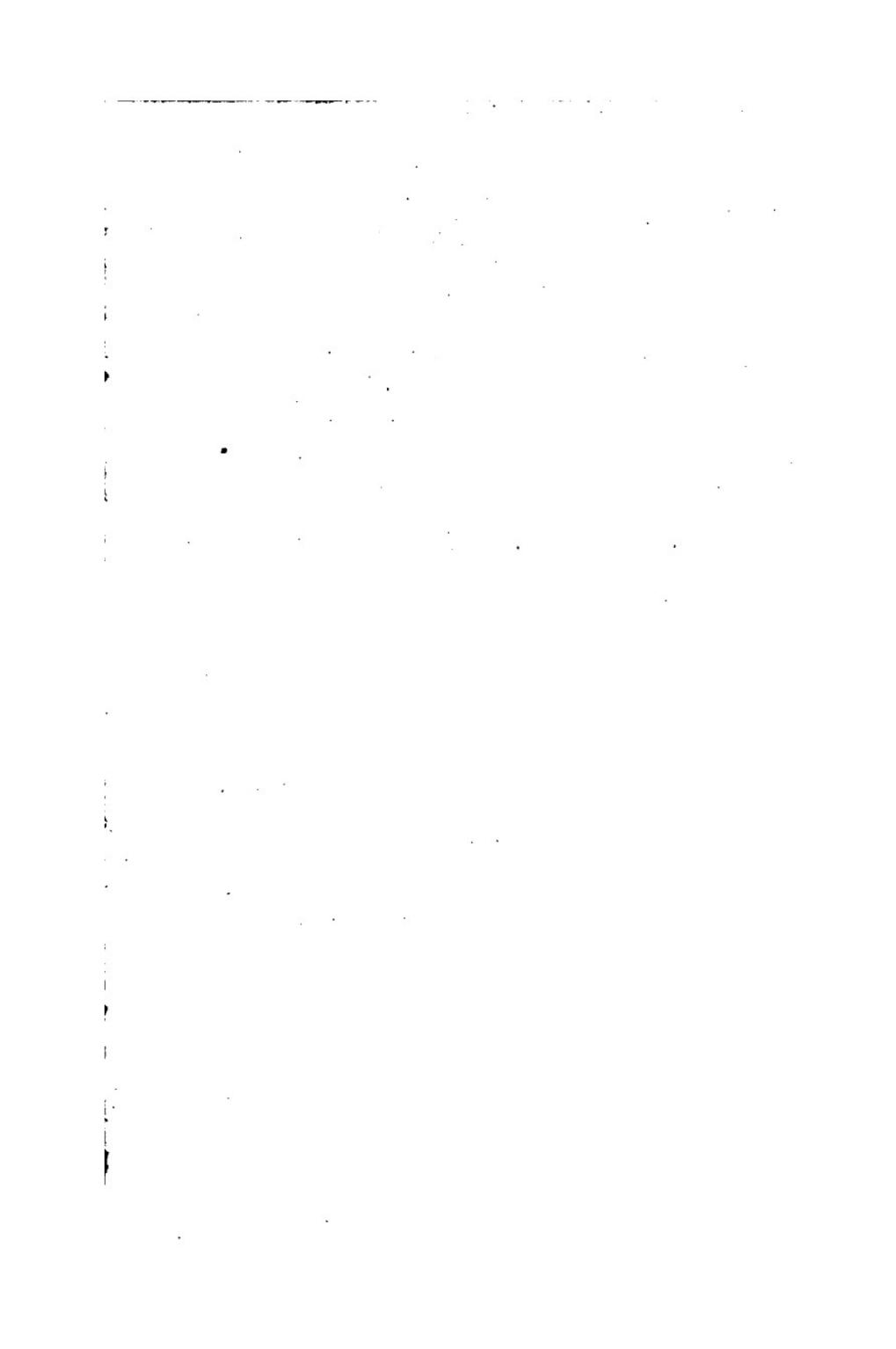
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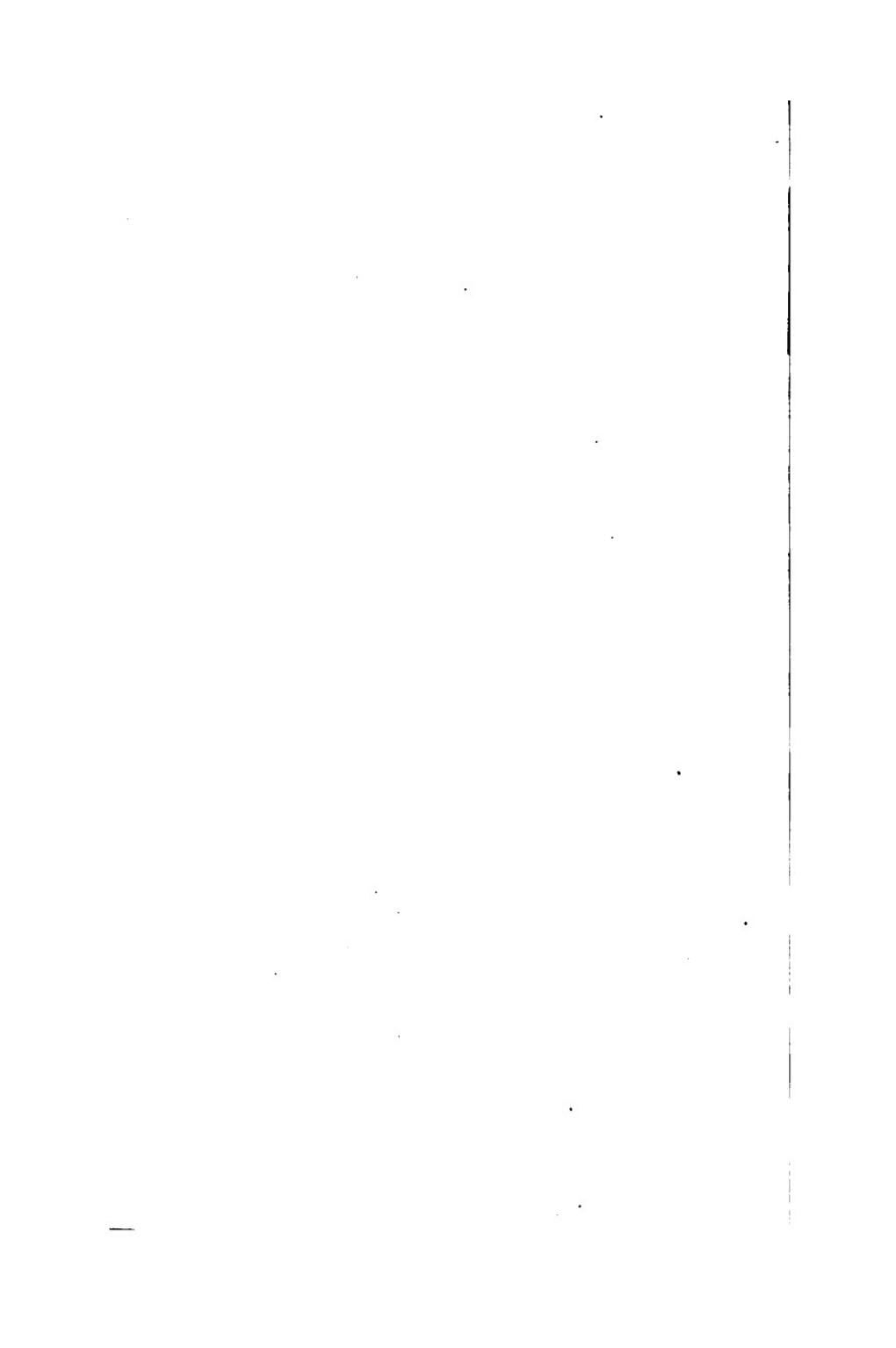
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THE

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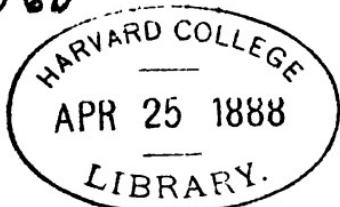
Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.
1 Cor. 16:13.

BY CALEB KIMBALL,
Author of "The Holy Spirit Resisted," &c. &c

FIFTH EDITION.

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P R E F A C E.

It is highly important that those who are just commencing a religious life should have a correct view of the work before them, and should know also how it may be done in the best way. If in works of art rules are necessary, they are no less so in things of religion. A well-proportioned Christian character will not be formed without them. The young Christian is a child in knowledge, as well as in grace. He needs instruction. A mistake at the outset is rarely corrected. It is much easier to begin right, than to break up wrong habits when once established. It is hoped that the directions given in these pages will be of special service

to those who are entering upon a religious life. For young Christians particularly, though not exclusively, the book has been prepared, and is now given to the public. It may not be amiss, however, for older Christians to read it, and see whether their standard of practical piety corresponds with the oracles of revealed truth.

If, in giving directions to various classes, the same or nearly the same idea is sometimes repeated, it is hoped that the importance of the subject will be a sufficient apology.

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THE
YOUNG CHRISTIAN DIRECTED.

CHAPTER I.

THE NATURE AND MAGNITUDE OF THE YOUNG
CHRISTIAN'S WORK.

If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature ; old things are passed away ; behold, all things are become new 2 Cor. 5 : 17.

WHEN we undertake an important work, which is attended with great personal responsibility, it is desirable that we understand its nature and magnitude, as well as the means by which it may most successfully be accomplished. The work which the young Christian commences in becoming a disciple of Christ is one of this description. It is a work for life, involving his duty and destiny, the honor of God, and the happiness of many who, like himself, are bound to an existence beyond the grave.

As I am about to give directions in

regard to a life of experimental religion, I shall take it for granted that you, whom I now address as a young Christian, have experienced that change of heart denominated in Scripture the *new birth*; that you have entered the straight and narrow way which leads to eternal life, and, in pursuing it, will aim steadily to glorify God, that you may enjoy his approbation and presence forever. Allow me to say, then, that, in passing from death to life, you have experienced a great change; you have entered a new and spiritual world; you have new desires, hopes, feelings, and objects of affection and pursuit. You are, indeed, a new creature in Christ Jesus; "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

The life which you have just commenced is spiritual. It is a life of faith, of unwavering trust in the Lord Jehovah for righteousness and strength, and is said in Scripture to be hid with Christ in God. "I live," says the apostle Paul; "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by

the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Gal. 2: 20.

It is a life of holiness. You are required to die unto sin; to put off the old man with his deeds; to be holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners; to be holy, as God is holy; and for this you must strive earnestly, until you arrive at a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

It is a life of holy affection. You are required to love God for his own sake, and man subordinately for God's sake; to love holiness for its own intrinsic excellence; to love Christians because they resemble Christ; to love your neighbor as yourself; and to love and bless your enemies.

It is a life of humility. You are required to walk humbly with God; to learn of Christ to be meek and lowly in heart, that you may find rest to your soul.

It is a life of penitence. You are required to exercise godly sorrow; to be contrite in spirit; to mourn for sin with sincere and deep penitence, because it is wrong in its nature and tendency, opposed

to the law and government of God, and highly derogatory to his character and glory.

It is a life of prayer. You are required to pray to God often, and fervently ; to pray in faith, and without ceasing ; to pray always, with all prayer and supplication, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.

It is a life of self-denial. You must deny yourself sinful gratifications, all ungodliness, and every worldly lust. "If any man will come after me," says our Saviour "let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me."

It is a life of activity. Indolence is no part of religion. You are required to be "not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." The work to be done is great enough to task to the uttermost all your powers of body, intellect, and heart.

It is a life of endurance. The way to heaven is an upward course, and in pursuing it you must endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. "He that endureth unto the end shall be saved."

It is a life of perseverance. You are not to look back nor turn again to the beggarly elements of the world. "Remember Lot's wife." "No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Luke 9: 62. The longest and most difficult journey can be completed by successive steps, and can be completed in no other way. The way to heaven is a way of holiness ; and you are to pursue it step by step, until you reach Mount Zion above, and receive "the end of your faith, even the salvation of your soul."

It is a life of progress. You are not to be stationary. The Christian's watchword is 'Onward.' "Arise ye, and depart, for this is not your rest." You are to grow daily in faith, knowledge, and holiness, until clothed with immortality above.

It is a life of enjoyment. "Great peace have they that love thy law." "The righteous shall flourish as the palm-tree." The ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness. Rejoice in the Lord always. Your enjoyment will be derived from loving and serv-

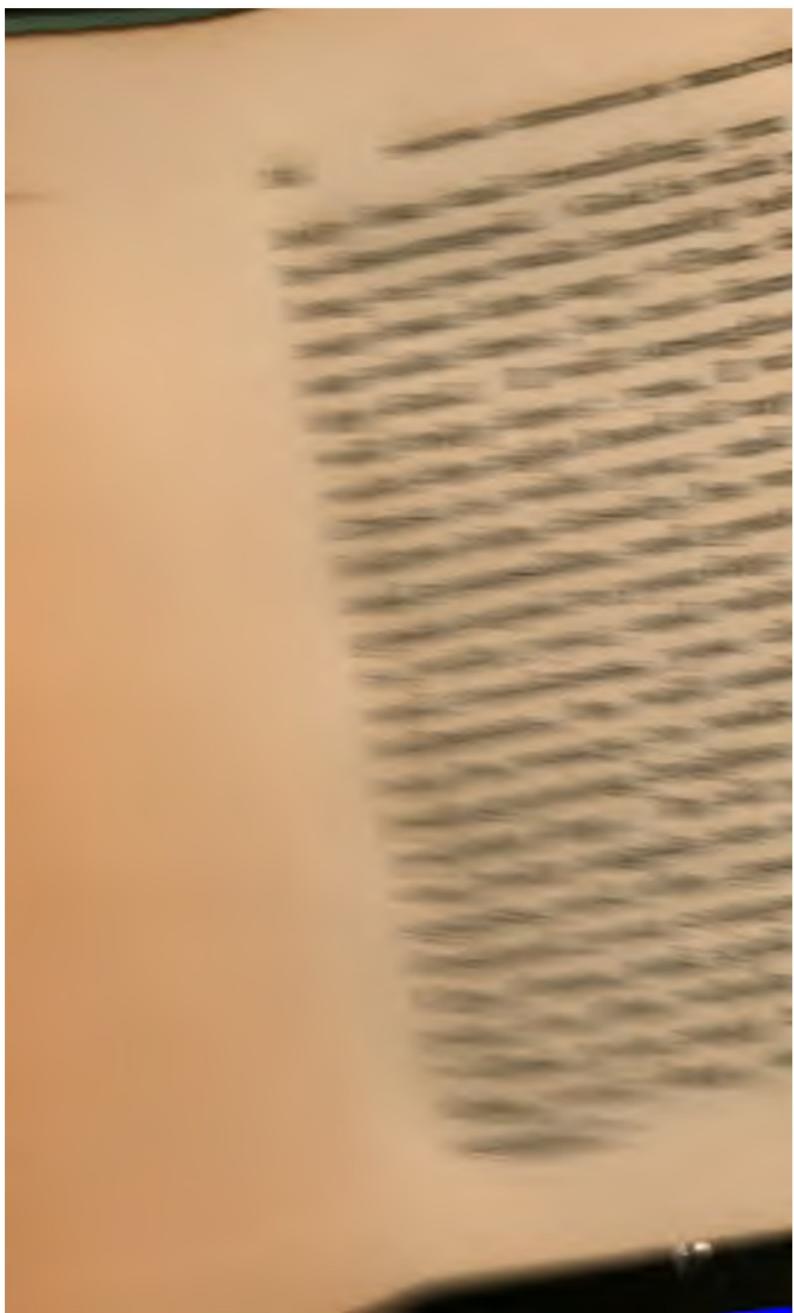
ing God, and will be in proportion to your conformity to his pleasure. His will is to be your law, and his glory your aim. In the path of duty you will find numerous fountains of divine consolation — pure, spiritual, and exhaustless — ever fresh and ever flowing — because they spring from God, their pure and inexhaustible source. These fountains are accessible, and from them you may drink at pleasure, and be refreshed.

It is a life of conflict. Enemies, active and subtle, beset your path. The world, the flesh, and the devil, are against you. These you will meet at every step, and, by the grace of God, must overcome them. You will be called to contend with principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places. Unsubdued passions within, and temptations without, must be manfully withstood.

It is a life of conquests. The Christian's life is a warfare, the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. The weapons to be used in this warfare "are not carnal, but spiritual, and

mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds, and bringing every power into obedience to Christ." In the fight of faith you are to gain the victory. Though cast down, you are not to be destroyed, but to rise again in the strength of Christ, and conquer. All your fleshly appetites and sinful propensities are to be subdued. By the grace of God you are to gain victories over them every day. The world is to be kept under your feet, and the great adversary of souls discomfited. In Christ you are to gain the final victory over sin, and death, and hell ; and in your song of triumph you are to ascribe the glory to God and the Lamb. When the last enemy is conquered, and the final victory gained, you are to be crowned with glory, honor, and immortality, in the presence of God and the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb.

Such is the nature and magnitude of the work, which, as a disciple of Christ, you have undertaken. It is indeed a great work ; and while you enter upon it with



CHAPTER II.

DEPENDENCE ON GOD.

God is our refuge and strength. Ps. 46:1.
Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you. 1 Peter 5:7.

ONE of the first lessons which the young Christian should learn, and which should be most deeply impressed upon his heart, is, that his own wisdom and strength are not adequate to the work before him: for these he must look above and beyond himself. This lesson many are so slow to learn, that they are often taught it in the school of affliction. I hope it will not be so with you. Cherish, then, a deep and abiding sense of your entire dependence upon God. He is the unchanging source of life and blessedness. All power and wisdom are his. He is the great moral sun which enlightens the universe; the infinite fountain of mercy and goodness, from which all blessings proceed. What can you do without him? Your

own strength is weakness. With this sentiment you cannot be too deeply impressed. Aside from God, you have neither wisdom nor grace adequate to your work. You will not grow in holiness, nor take one step in the divine life, without his aid. You can never be too deeply impressed with this noble sentiment,— that from God must proceed

“Your high endeavor, and your glad success,
Your strength to suffer, and your will to serve.”

“Our help cometh from the name of the Lord, which made heaven and earth.” Paul never labored so much like a giant as when he felt most deeply that his own strength was weakness. The church never appears so much like an army with banners as when she is seen coming up from the wilderness leaning upon the arm of her Beloved.

God is your light, your strength, your hope, your wisdom and righteousness ; and while you confide in him, he will be your exceeding great reward. You have a race to run, but you must run it in the strength

of God. You have a crown to win ; but you must win it by the grace of God. You have enemies to meet and conquer ; but you must meet and conquer them in the strength of God. It was not Gideon's pitchers and lamps which gave him that signal victory over his enemies, but his firm reliance upon Israel's God.

David once met and conquered a giant with a sling and stone ; but neither his sling nor his stone gave him the victory. "I come to thee," said he, "in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel." 1 Sam. 17: 45. His reliance upon God was the grand secret of his success. Divine wisdom directed that stone, and divine power gave it effect, and before it the giant fell. In this way you are to meet and overcome your spiritual enemies ; and your success will be in proportion to your steady reliance upon divine aid.

In prayer you must depend upon the teachings of the Holy Spirit. "The Spirit itself helpeth our infirmities." In

reading the Scriptures, you must seek wisdom from above. God, by his Spirit, will enable you to understand and feel his truth. In conversing with the impenitent, you must rely for success upon divine aid. God alone can enable you to speak a word which will reach the heart. I admire the course pursued by that young man, who, when about to converse with sinners on personal religion, first entered his closet and asked counsel of God. On leaving his closet, he continued in silent prayer for success; while engaged in conversation, he would often send up silent but fervent desires to God for his blessing. I need not add, that his labors were not in vain. He relied upon God, and God greatly prospered his efforts in winning souls to Christ.

When called to pass through the furnace of affliction, you must rest solely upon an arm of infinite strength, and present your supplications to your Father in heaven. The Psalmist did so, and found relief: "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee,

O Lord!" Ps. 130: 1. "In my distress I cried unto the Lord, and he heard me."
Ps. 120: 1. A good man, who for many years was in deep affliction, but trusted in God, once observed, "I am still in the furnace, and yet not a hair of my head has fallen, nor the smell of fire passed upon me."

In all your trials and perplexities, carry your cause to God. He will not suffer you to sink under them. "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," is his kind assurance. Let a sense of your entire dependence upon God attend you in every duty. Without it, no acceptable prayer will be offered, no victories gained, and no right feelings cherished. O, what security and blessedness there is in going to God, and in saying from the heart, Abba, Father, thou art my light, my joy, my wisdom and strength — the guide of my youth, and the stay of my soul !

Let it be impressed upon your heart, as with the point of a diamond, that, if you become proud and self-confident, and lose

your sense of dependence, you will lose with it the sustaining and comforting presence of your God and Saviour, and dishonor your profession. A man of uncommon enterprise once observed, "When, in years past, I have been lifted up with my success, and lost my sense of dependence, I have almost invariably been taught it to my sorrow, by sad reverses in business."

Pride and self-confidence drove the king of Babylon from his splendid palace to dwell among the beasts of the field, until he was brought to feel that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men. There once sailed upon the ocean a noble ship, manned with sailors who seemed to have lost their sense of God's superintending providence, and feared not to blaspheme his name. At one time during the voyage, this ship, with many others, was anchored off Gibraltar, where is no harbor. Night came on, and with it a dreadful tempest. The sea was suddenly thrown into wild commotion, vessels were dashed against each other, and some were driven upon the

rocks. The tempest howled, and the cry of distress was heard on every side. These hardened sailors began now to feel their dependence upon God, and to beg for mercy. Death seemed inevitable. They went to the captain, who was a pious man, and literally compelled him to fall upon his knees and commend them to God in prayer. He did so, and the tempest was hushed. In the morning they found that they had barely escaped being dashed upon the rocks.

Their ship was held only by one small anchor, which had connected itself with another weighing two thousand pounds, at the bottom of the ocean. Now, these sailors were no more dependent upon God in this hour of distress than when their gallant ship was gliding like a sea-bird over the waves. Happy had it been for them, if, in their prosperity, they had realized that God alone was their keeper, and had not been compelled to learn it amid the wailings of the tempest and the horrors of the deep. And happy will it be for you, if, in times

of prosperity, you rely solely upon God, in the diligent use of means, and avoid the necessity of learning this lesson of practical piety under the frowns of his providence and the chastenings of his hand.

O, there was an hour when, under the pressure of guilt, you felt that no created arm could save you. In all your helplessness, you then cast yourself upon God, and he appeared as your deliverer. Let the same feeling be cherished through the whole course of your earthly existence. While you are active in every Christian duty, rely steadily upon an arm of infinite strength, until the topstone of your salvation is laid with shoutings, Grace, grace unto it.

CHAPTER III.

LOOKING UNTO JESUS.

For without me ye can do nothing. John 15:5.

To make rapid progress in the Christian life, you must often look away from yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ, who loved you, and gave himself for you, and who alone is able to save. In yourself you will discover nothing but weakness and corruption. In Christ you will find sinless purity, righteousness, and strength — all your salvation, and all your desire; “who of God,” says an apostle, “is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” 1 Cor. 1: 30. “For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.” Col. 1: 19. From this fulness of grace dwelling in Christ, all your spiritual wants must be hourly supplied.

It is not enough that you were once pardoned, when Christ first appeared for you,

and spake peace to your troubled spirit. Though not impenitent, you are a sinner still, and must look to Christ for fresh pardon every day. It is not enough that you were once washed from your iniquities in the blood of Jesus, and justified by grace. You must be washed from them hourly, and "justified and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." It is not enough that you once found peace in believing. You must find peace in believing every day ; and you must find it by looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of the Christian's faith.

Are you walking in darkness, and see no light ? Look by faith to Jesus, and you will find him to be not only a bright morning star, assuring you that day is approaching, but the full-orbed Sun of righteousness, pouring light and glory upon your path, and making it luminous and pleasant all the way upward to the courts above. When burdened with a sense of guilt, stand close by the cross, and fasten your eye of faith upon the Lamb of God, who bled upon it.

Here the dying thief found relief, and the distressed jailer peace, in believing. Here, too, though burdened with guilt, you will always find in deep repentance sweet relief. The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth from all sin, of which we sincerely repent. You must never lose sight of Christ. He is to be your theme and song. When tempted and tried, you must fly to him. He will be your shield and defence against the fiery darts of the wicked. The righteousness of Christ is your only hiding-place against the inflexible demands of God's broken law. When weary and faint, you must lean upon the bosom of Jesus. "Come unto me," he says; "my grace shall be sufficient." "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."

To grow in grace, you must have Christ within and around you. "He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing." John 15: 5. Henry Martyn somewhere observes, "With the Bible in my hand, and Christ at my right hand, I

can do all things." And the apostle Paul declares, "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me."

The more you delight in Christ, the more he will delight in you ; the more closely you follow him, the more he will bless you. If you give him the throne of your heart, he will give you in return a crown of glory. If you honor him with your best service, he will honor you with his presence here, and a seat in the heavenly places. "None but Christ, none but Christ!" exclaimed a dying martyr, as the flames enveloped him. I once entered the humble dwelling of an afflicted disciple of Jesus, who was an uncommon Christian. She was poor in this world's goods, feeble in health, and, in addition to other cares, was called to wait upon a beloved daughter, who was languishing under a most distressing disease. I found her cheerful and happy. When asked how she got along amidst so many labors, — "O," exclaimed she, "I am thinking of Jesus! When about my work, my thoughts are going up to my

precious Saviour. He is always present. I cast my burdens upon him, and he bears them for me." Her intimate and constant communion with Christ was the grand secret of her eminent piety.

If you are poor, think of Christ, who, when on earth, had not where to lay his head ; if rich, remember that he, too, was once rich, but for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich. Like him, therefore, abound in good works ; be ready to distribute, willing to communicate. If you are afflicted, think of Jesus : he also was distressed, and he was afflicted, "yet he opened not his mouth." If at any time you are inclined to murmur under the crosses and vexations of life, look unto Jesus, and see how meekly he endured them all, and even the contradiction of sinners against himself, and let his example hush your complaints. In prayer you must always approach God in the name and through the mediation of Christ. You can have no fellowship with God out of Christ. He would be to you a consuming fire. It

was a saying of Luther, "I cannot meet an absolute God ;" that is, God without a Mediator. In Christ you must meet and speak with God. He is your great High Priest and Intercessor. He pleads, and you live : he takes your imperfect prayers, and presents them with his own blood upon the golden altar above, and they prevail with God. Do you hunger for the bread of life ? You will find it in Christ. Do you thirst for the water of life ? In Christ alone is the living spring. Do you long and pant for the living God ? You will find him in Christ. He is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person. Do you hunger and thirst after righteousness ? Christ alone can satisfy your strong desires. Look, then, to Christ : in him all fulness dwells. Observe his expansive benevolence, and imitate him in doing good. Cultivate his meek and gentle, his forgiving, kind, and compassionate spirit.

Learn of him to feel for and weep over sinners. Follow him into the mountain, and hear him importune with God, and

learn yourself to intercede. Stand by him in the garden, and hear him pray, and learn from him to agonize. Behold him on the cross suffer and die. He died for you, that henceforth you should "live not unto yourself, but unto Him who died for you and rose again."

He rose from the dead : like him, therefore, rise daily from the death of sin to a new and spiritual life. He ascends to heaven : go up with him in your thoughts and feelings, and commune with him there. Set your affections upon things above. Thus commence and pursue your Christian course, and you will be able to say, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me ; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Gal. 2: 20. So shall your path to heaven be like the rising light, growing brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.

CHAPTER IV.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ESSENTIAL TO THE YOUNG CHRISTIAN'S PROGRESS.

Be filled with the Spirit. Eph. 5:18.

Your progress in the Christian life will depend very much upon your treatment of the divine Spirit. His agency is no less important in the work of salvation than the merits and intercession of the Lord Jesus. You need his holy influence, not only to enlighten your understanding and purify your heart, but to quicken all your Christian graces ; to enable you to pray acceptably ; to give you a relish for divine truth ; to unfold to you the perfections of God, and form Christ in your soul, day by day, the hope of glory. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth." John 6:63. "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." John 16:13.

To enjoy permanently the sanctifying

influence of the Holy Spirit, you must carefully suppress those unhallowed passions inconsistent with his gracious work, and cultivate diligently all the kind and heavenly affections.

1. You must suppress unholy passions. It is worthy of special notice, that the apostle, in exhorting the Ephesian converts not to grieve the Holy Spirit, adds this important caution : "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice." Eph. 4: 31. And the apostle Peter enjoins it upon Christians to "lay aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings." 1 Peter 2: 1. These servants of God knew well that, where such passions reigned in the human heart, the Holy Spirit could not dwell permanently, nor carry forward his gracious work.

Beware of an angry and revengeful spirit. It is exceedingly hateful in the sight of God. One fit of anger will do more to grieve the Spirit than you can do to secure

his presence by hours of repentance, humiliation, and prayer. "Anger," says Jeremy Taylor, "is a fever in the heart, and a calenture in the head, and a fire in the face, and a sword in the hand, and a fury all over ;" and with such furies the Spirit of God has no sympathy, and will not dwell.

Check, also, the first rising of envy and evil speaking : these, if indulged, will grieve the Spirit. Guard, moreover, against an irritable temper. Irritability, if cherished, will gather strength ; and such feelings are hostile to the kind and gentle influence of the holy Comforter. Some professed Christians are so passionate and peevish, and fret and scold so much about the little crosses and perplexities of life, that one would really think they were born out of due time. Such Christians will not enjoy those elevated views and heavenly consolations which result from the permanent indwelling of the divine Comforter.

Guard with care against covetousness. It is idolatry, and, if cherished, will grieve the Spirit. God abhors it : he cannot en-

dure idols set up in the heart. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," is the divine command. "Love not the world." "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

The lusts of the flesh also must be checked, and your carnal appetites subdued: these are destructive to the work of the Spirit. He cannot dwell in a heart where such passions are cherished. You must bring under your body, and keep it in subjection, if you would enjoy the refreshing presence of the holy Comforter. The pride of your heart also must be effectually subdued. A haughty spirit is exceedingly offensive to God. "He hath respect unto the lowly, but the proud he knoweth afar off." Ps. 138 : 6. "To this man will I look," saith Jehovah, "even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." Is. 66 : 2. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Luke 18 : 14.

Remember, moreover, that you are to be the temple of the living God, and that the Holy Ghost is to dwell in you. "Know

ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you ?” 1 Cor. 3 : 16. “ For ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them ; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” 2 Cor. 6 : 16. As you are, therefore, a temple of the Holy Ghost, you must watch and guard this temple with the greatest care, that nothing offensive to the eyes of infinite purity may find a lodgment in it. But to enjoy the presence of the divine Spirit, you have something further to do. Your religion must not be merely negative ; for,—

2. You must possess and cultivate diligently all the Christian graces.

You are not only to die unto sin, but to live unto righteousness ; not only to put off the old man with his deeds, but to put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him. An inspired apostle has given to Christians the following important directions : “ Be ye therefore followers of God

as dear children, and walk in love." Eph. 5 : 1. "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love." Rom. 12 : 10. "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Eph. 4 : 3. "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness ; and be ye thankful." Col. 3 : 12, 14. This is the spirit you must cherish, and these the feelings you must cultivate ; and with such a spirit the blessed Comforter delights to dwell.

If you are planted in Christ as a tree of righteousness, and rooted and grounded in him, and watered with the dews and showers of divine mercy, you will bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, which are "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Gal. 5 : 22, 23. While favored with the presence of the Holy Spirit, your communion

with God will be most delightful and refreshing ; your prayers will be fervent and spiritual ; the Saviour will be near and precious ; and heavenly scenes will often open before you with uncommon beauty, solemnity, and grandeur.

Your views of revealed religion will be clear and impressive ; the closet will be a hallowed spot, the family altar a place of holy delight ; and the sanctuary will be to you the house of God and the gate of heaven. Your heart will be greatly enlarged, your benevolent feelings strengthened ; your light will rise in obscurity, and your darkness be as the noonday. You will run and not be weary, and walk and not faint, in the way of life.

You see, then, that the presence of the Holy Spirit will be to you a blessing of immense magnitude. Without it you will do nothing, either for the salvation of souls or the divine glory. Learn, then, to set a proper estimate upon this last gift of Heaven. Prize it infinitely above every temporal blessing. Ask of God large measures

of divine influence. He will give them ; he has promised to do it. He gives liberally, and upbraids not. Importune, and even agonize, for the gift of the Spirit ; take no denial. Such importunity is pleasing to God. Jacob wrestled all night, and obtained the blessing. "Call unto me," saith God, "and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." Jer. 33 : 3.

CHAPTER V.

SECRET PRAYER.

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret ; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. Mat. 6:6.

SECRET prayer is the offering up of our desires to God, in the name of Christ, for such things as we and others need, in some place where none but God can see or hear us ; confessing, at the same time, our sins, and thanking God for his mercies. These desires may be offered mentally, or they may be expressed in an audible voice, or whisper.

Daily secret prayer is the indispensable duty of every Christian ; and no one will grow in grace without it. Those who habitually neglect this duty, when favored with health, have reason to believe that they are utter strangers to experimental religion. We all have sins enough to confess, and mercies to implore, to induce us

to enter our closets at least twice or three times in a day, and pour out our fervent supplications to God.

The advantages of secret prayer are numerous. We are shut up from the world ; the fear of man is removed ; the eye of God alone sees us. We may approach him without embarrassment, as our reconciled Father, and confess freely and specifically those sins which might be improper to confess before the world. We can multiply our petitions, and pray long and fervently for spiritual blessings, without wearying any but ourselves. It can be hardly necessary for me to say, that your progress in the Christian life will depend very much upon the manner in which you perform your secret devotions. If you pray in your closet only occasionally, and perform the duty in a careless, formal manner, you will derive from it but little profit. Such prayers dishonor God. It pains my heart to hear Christians say they pray in secret sometimes, or occasionally. This is not the way to please God, or go to heaven. In

your closet devotions, then, be regular, constant, and devoutly serious. Let no company or worldly avocations draw or drive you from the duty.

It is important that you have set times for your private devotions. I would advise you, therefore, to pray in your closet three times in a day — in the morning, at noon, and early in the evening. You will find such a habit of secret prayer of immense service to you in all your future course. A young man once observed, "I was prevented in the morning by some providence from attending to my secret devotions, and felt the loss of them through the day more than I should the loss of my necessary food." Habit is a second nature ; and, if correct, it operates with great power to keep us in the path of duty. In the early part of my ministry, I directed young Christians to pray regularly in their closets twice a day, morning and evening ; but for several years I have advised them to pray in secret at noon also, and have found that the result of this course, when pursued, has

been invariably happy. Daniel was in the habit of praying in his chamber three times a day, and probably at the times above specified. This he did, moreover, under a pressure of public business, as prime minister of state, which but few men could sustain, and in the certain prospect that, for doing it, he would be cast into the lion's den. Dan. 6 : 10. The Psalmist says, "Evening, and morning, and at noon will I pray and cry aloud, and he shall hear my voice." Ps. 55 : 17. And again, "At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee." Ps. 119 : 62. These examples you may safely follow. In a precious revival of religion in my congregation, I advised the converts to form the habit of praying in their closets three times a day, and to allow no worldly business whatever to turn them aside from this duty. When the time arrived for admitting them to the church, it was found, on examination, that nearly all of them had adopted this course. Years have since elapsed, and they have all run well, have become pillars in the

church, and shine as lights in the world. I have invariably found that those Christians who pray most in secret, make the most rapid progress in personal piety.

In private prayer we are not only refreshed in spirit, not only get new views of God and Christ, holiness and heaven, of ourselves and the work of redemption, but we gather strength to withstand the temptations of the adversary, and the allurements of an ungodly world. A very devoted Christian, who for many years had been in the habit of praying in his closet three times a day, and whose piety shone out like the sun in his strength, once observed, "At noon I yielded to temptation, and allowed some business to prevent me from attending as usual to my private devotions; before night I was left to speak unadvisedly with my lips, and sinned against God." This disciple of Jesus was one of the hardest laboring men I ever knew, and I may add, also, one of the best Christians. Here let me advise you not to satisfy your conscience with a few feeble, broken petitions,

offered in silence upon your bed, or in your family, or when about your work, encumbered with business. You may pray, indeed, as much as you please in this way ; but never substitute such petitions for your regular private devotions.

To derive the greatest benefit from secret prayer, you must be alone with God, and encumbered as little as possible with worldly concerns ; and for this purpose, you should seek some retired place, secluded from the world, where you will experience no interruption, and there pour out your fervent supplications into the bosom of your Father in heaven. This direction has been given by our Saviour : " Enter into thy closet," into some retired place, away from human observation, " and when thou hast shut thy door," when thou hast shut out the world, " pray to thy Father, which is in secret." You will probably find a place in your habitation suitable for private devotion ; if not, seek a place elsewhere. Isaac's closet was the field ; Daniel's closet was his chamber ; the Saviour's closet was

a mountain ; and Peter performed his private devotions upon the house-top.

It is desirable, also, if possible, to perform our private devotions always in the same place. The spot where we often kneel and commune with God becomes peculiarly sacred. The associations connected with it are favorable to devotion. There we feel at home, and the recollections of past divine manifestations there enjoyed, encourage us to press our cause with great fervor and importunity before the throne. "Those places," observed a minister of Christ, "where for years I have often knelt, and prayed in secret, seem to me like so many little sanctuaries let down from the skies."

You will do well, if not liable to be overheard, to pray in your closet in an audible voice, barely loud enough for yourself to hear. The sound of your voice will aid you in excluding wandering thoughts, and will render the prayer to yourself more impressive. Guard, however, against any suggestion or disposition to speak so loud,

in your private devotions, as intentionally to be overheard. This would be exceedingly offensive to God. While conversing with a family, in one of my parochial visits, I heard, at a distance, the cry of some one, as I supposed, in distress. The good lady of the house stepped out to ascertain the cause of it, and, on returning, observed that her neighbor was performing her secret devotions. She screamed so loud, however, as to be heard at quite a distance. But her religion, as might be expected, was as short-lived as it was ostentatious and noisy. Such praying in secret I could not recommend. It looks too much like the Pharisees, who prayed at the corners of the streets, to be seen of men.

The length of our private devotions must depend on circumstances. There may be times when we may feel constrained to protract them much beyond their ordinary length, and still not interfere with other duties. On one occasion, the Saviour continued all night alone in prayer to God. David Brainerd often spent two or three

hours in the most fervent private devotion, and was wonderfully blessed of God. It is said that Dr. Payson sometimes spent whole days in his study pleading for sinners. Such protracted seasons of devotion but few have enough bodily vigor, and still fewer sufficient grace, to sustain. You will not be inclined, I think, to spend too much time in the closet, and on this point need not be cautioned. I must entreat you, however, never to omit your private devotions, although you can devote to them no more than three or five minutes. One omission prepares the way for another, and here begin our wanderings from God. Acceptable prayer depends not on its length, but on the faith and fervor with which it is offered. If you are weary, pray in your closet; you may still find the divine presence. If pressed with business, pray in your closet, and here obtain wisdom and grace to do it successfully. If the season is cold, by no means, on this account, omit your private devotions. Fervent prayer will warm even the body. I knew a young

man, who, it is said, would pray so fervently, that, in the cold of winter, he would leave his closet in a state of perspiration.

Some, who call themselves Christians, will not pray in their closets unless they feel like it, and therefore rarely, if ever, enter them. This course is destructive to piety. It is very easy to feel wrong. A fitful religion is undesirable. The Bible; not your feelings, is to be the rule by which to govern yourself in matters pertaining to a life of godliness. The Saviour has nowhere commanded us to pray in our closets when we feel like doing it, but to enter them and pray. If you feel wrong, pray the more. Private prayer is the most effectual means to dislodge improper feelings, and secure right ones. If you succeed not in the first attempt, try again, until the fire upon your secret altar burns with a pure and heavenly flame. We should not enter our closets reluctantly, or be driven to them by conscience ; but hunger and thirst for our seasons of communion with God. Private prayer is not only a

sacred duty, but a most precious privilege ; and as such, I hope you will ever regard it. It is desirable to read the Scriptures in connection with private devotion ; but if this is impracticable, seize a few precious promises, and pray.

Always have some special and specific requests to make when you appear before God in secret prayer. In addition to yourself, remember your relatives and friends, the church, the ministers of Jesus, sinners of all descriptions, the various objects of Christian benevolence, institutions of learning, the cause of temperance, the oppressor and the oppressed, your country and its rulers, those who do business upon the great waters, the missionaries of the cross, and a perishing world. You will find, indeed, that the objects for which daily and fervent prayer should be offered, are almost endless. "Pray," says an apostle, "with all prayer and supplication, for all men, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting."

CHAPTER VI.

THE FEELINGS TO BE CHERISHED IN PRIVATE DEVOTION.

Be ye holy, for I am holy. 1 Peter 1:16.
Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly.
Psalm 138:6.

OUR approaches to God in prayer should always be attended with the deepest humility, and the most profound reverence and awe. Before commencing the duty, it will be profitable to reflect for a moment who God is, how great and glorious, how vast in his being, and how immensely exalted he is above all his works. Remember that he is in heaven, and thou upon earth ; that he is infinitely holy, and thou unspeakably vile ; that he is the independent Sovereign of the universe, and thou a poor, dependent, and guilty creature, not worthy of the least of all his mercies. I have often thought of the deep self-abasement, holy fear, and reverence, with which great and faithful Abra-

ham prayed for Sodom. "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes! O, let not the Lord be angry!" Gen. 18:27, 30. The feeling exhibited in this prayer should ever pervade our spirits when we address Jehovah.

You will find it difficult, and even impossible, to form any adequate idea of God, so infinitely exalted is he above the highest conceptions of his creatures. But you must worship him as the great Jehovah revealed in the Bible, possessing all those attributes ascribed to him in his Word, and which shine with such unclouded lustre in the works of creation, providence, and redemption. It is proper in prayer to offer petitions to Christ, as God manifest in the flesh; and to the Holy Spirit, as a distinct person in the Trinity; but ordinarily we should address ourselves to God the Father, in the name of Christ, relying upon the aid of the Holy Spirit. Beware, when you pray, that you attach to God no material form or shape, to do which, as creatures of

sense, we are much inclined. He is an infinite Spirit, and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. Never allow the world to enter with you into the closet. When about to engage in private devotion, say to all earthly cares, as Abraham did to his servants, "Tarry ye here, while I go yonder and worship." At such times you will often experience a severe conflict; but cast yourself at the feet of Jesus, and cry to him for strength, and you will receive help from above. Beware, when you attempt to pray, that you cherish no forbidden lust, or passion, or unkind feeling in your bosom. These will hinder your prayers. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Ps. 66 : 18. Cultivate also a forgiving spirit, and let it pervade your bosom when you bow in supplication at the mercy-seat. Remember that you are to be forgiven of God no farther than you forgive others. This is a solemn consideration, and it may well constrain us to watch our spirits when we present our petitions to a holy, jealous,

sin-hating, and sin-forgiving God. "When ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any, that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses." Mark 11 : 25, 26. Our Lord has taught us to pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." You should approach God in prayer as your kind and gracious Father, reconciling you and the world to himself by Jesus Christ. When you bow before him in the closet, confess freely and fully your sins and the sins of others, and be careful to do it with sincere and deep contrition. Daniel did so, (Daniel 9,) and we shall do well to follow his example. Be specific in confession ; keep nothing back. On this much depends. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper ; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." Prov. 28 : 13. "If we confess our sins," says the apostle John, "he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from

all unrighteousness." 1 John 1: 9. True confession of sin is always attended with godly sorrow ; and this is the only condition on which we are to receive pardon. The publican who, in deep prostration of spirit, confessed his sins, was pardoned and justified ; while the Pharisee, wrapped in his own righteousness, and boasting of his superior goodness before the Lord, was rejected.

Be careful to bow low, and keep low, in supplication. For the lowly, God has a peculiar regard. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Your prayers must be offered also in lively faith — faith in the being and perfections of God — faith in Christ the Mediator — faith in the Spirit of grace, and in all the divine promises. Without faith we shall offer no acceptable prayer. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Heb. 11: 6. You must pray with fervor. Great earnestness becomes us when we ask that eternal life may be granted to us and to

millions dying in sin. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." James 5: 16. You must pray with expectation. The husbandman who scatters his seed in the furrow expects, with the early and latter rain, to reap a joyful harvest; for God has promised that seed-time and harvest shall never cease. The child who asks a reasonable favor of an indulgent parent, who has never denied him any good thing, expects that his request will be granted. For the same, and infinitely higher reasons, may we expect that God will answer our prayers when we ask of him spiritual blessings. He has promised to do it, and no one of his promises has ever failed. He is boundless in resources, and as willing to give as he is rich in blessings. "Ask, and ye shall receive;" "Call unto me, and I will answer thee;" are his explicit declarations. It is dishonorable to God not to expect that he will answer our prayers, when we ask for things agreeable to his will; and we know that his will is that we should be humble

and holy, rich in faith, and ready to every good work.

You must pray with submission and perseverance. It is proper to pray for temporal blessings ; but, as we cannot be certain that, in all cases, it would be best for us to receive them, we should, when asking for such things, say from the heart, "Thy will be done." God knows best how much earthly good will prove to us a blessing ; and therefore we may safely leave our temporal concerns with him. But when we ask for the fruits of the Spirit, we may plead with great importunity, because we know it is the will of God to bestow them. "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." Is. 62 : 6, 7. Persevere in prayer. The blessings which you need one day you need every day ; and therefore it will be your duty and privilege to pray in your closet, when in health, while you live. "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought

always to pray, and not to faint." Luke 18 : 1.

In all your private devotions, cherish a spirit of gratitude and praise. Such feelings are pleasing to God. He takes great delight in the hearty thanksgivings and praises of his people. "Praise," says the Psalmist, "is comely for the upright in heart." "O, give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good." "Praise the Lord, all ye nations ; laud him, all ye people."

"And hourly, as new mercies fall,
Let hourly thanks arise."

The Psalms may be regarded as a book of Christian experience and devotion ; and it is worthy of special notice how much is said in them of thanksgiving and praise. These and kindred feelings we should exercise in private devotion ; and they should pervade our spirit also in family, social, and public prayer.

Here, perhaps, I may properly give a word of advice in respect to those short, silent petitions sent up to God while engaged in our ordinary business, which are

sometimes called ejaculatory prayer. When in the shop or in the field, while walking the streets, or on a journey, and in various other circumstances, if we possess the right spirit, and watch our opportunities, we may offer to God much effectual prayer. To this habit of devotion an apostle seems to refer when he says, "continuing instant in prayer." Rom. 12: 12. This course I hope you will adopt, and pursue to the end of life. In addition to the power which such prayers have in the court of heaven to procure for ourselves and others divine blessings, they exert a happy influence upon our own minds. They lead us to be more serious and devout, to think more of God and Christ, and of the souls of others, and fit us for the discharge of every other duty, especially those of private and family devotion. "How highly," says Cooke, "would a courtier prize a privy key of admittance to his sovereign at all times!" This key we possess in ejaculatory prayer. It is a golden chain of union between us and heaven. It was an excellent rule of a

good man, when he heard a profane oath uttered, always to offer for the individual a silent prayer. Should all Christians pursue such a course in this day of abounding wickedness, there would be, I think, a great deal of praying ; for "because of swearing the land mourneth." As these silent petitions do not interfere with our other duties, but rather assist us in performing them, much of the life of a spiritual Christian will be spent in this kind of prayer. Says the Psalmist, "I give myself unto prayer ;" which strongly implies that he offered up many fervent petitions not uttered by his lips. To the same effect the apostle instructs the Ephesian converts : "praying always with all prayer and supplication." Eph. 6: 18. When the patriarch Jacob, after much persuasion, consents that his youngest son should go down into Egypt, he offers up this short but earnest prayer : "God Almighty give you mercy before the man." Gen. 43: 14. When Joseph sees his brother Benjamin, he suddenly prays, "God be gracious unto thee, my son."

Gen. 43: 29. When the Egyptians were behind and the Red Sea before the Israelites, and they knew not what to do, the heart of Moses was with God; and though we read of no outward prayer, the Lord said unto him, "Why criest thou to me? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward." Ex. 14: 15.

These examples we may safely imitate, and thus become followers of them who through faith and patience have inherited the promises, and shine as the stars forever and ever.

CHAPTER VII.

FAMILY PRAYER.

Then David returned to bless his household. 2 Sam. 6 : 20.

As some who embrace religion are heads of families, it may be proper here to offer a few considerations on family worship. Abraham, the father of the faithful, prayed with his household. Wherever he pitched his tent, he built an altar unto the Lord, and offered upon it the sacrifice of prayer and praise. Gen. 12 : 7, 8. As all experimental Christians are the children of Abraham, (Gal. 3 : 29,) it is expected that they will do the works of Abraham. John 8 : 39. Pious Joshua resolved, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Josh. 24 : 15. I think we may reasonably infer, from his eminent piety, that no small part of this service consisted in prayer and praise with those under his care. When David brought the ark to Jerusalem with

great rejoicing, and had offered sacrifices, and blessed the people, he returned from these public services to the quiet devotions of his family, and blessed his household.

2 Sam. 6: 20.

Pious Job offered sacrifices for his household, and devoutly commended them to the mercy of the Most High ; "for," said he, "it may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually." Job 1: 5. The examples of these great and good men, and others of a kindred spirit on sacred record, sufficiently indicate the divine will in regard to family worship. Their morning and evening sacrifices were attended with devotion ; and from these we might infer that it is our duty, favored as we are with far greater light, to worship God in our families morning and evening.

Other considerations of great weight urge us to this duty. You stand at the head of the family, and ought to be to them an example of eminent godliness. You are a common centre, around which they are to

move, whose will they are to obey, and from whose example and lips they are to receive divine instruction. You are required to bring up your children, and all under your care, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord ; but this you will not do, unless you pray in your family. Prayer is the most effectual means of impressing upon the mind the great truths of religion. If blessed with children, you have, if I may so express it, a little parish under your care : for these souls you are to watch, and with and for them you are to offer daily and fervent prayer. O, how delightful it is to see parents and children kneeling around the domestic altar, and offering upon it their united and earnest devotions ! No sight on earth can be more affecting and impressive. Praying in your family will not only bring upon your household a divine blessing, but will lead you to walk more circumspectly before them during the day.

The condition of those families where God is not acknowledged, is strikingly portrayed in that solemn petition of the

prophet, "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not upon thy name." Jer. 10 : 25. What Christian, who seriously considers the import of this passage, would, by neglecting family worship, place himself and household among those who are liable to experience this fearful curse ? I trust, however, you are fully satisfied that praying in your family is not only an important duty, but a most precious privilege ; and as such I hope you will ever regard it. If you have any doubts on this point, you have sad reason to fear that your heart is not right in the sight of God.

Cecil says of family worship, rightly conducted, "It may be an engine of vast power in a family. It diffuses its sympathy through the members. It calls the mind off from the deadening effects of worldly affairs. It arrests every member with a morning and evening sermon, in the midst of all the hurries and cares of life. It says there is a God ! there is a spiritual world ! there is a life to come ! It fixes

the idea of responsibility in the mind. It furnishes a tender and judicious father or mother with an opportunity of gently glancing at faults, where a direct admonition might be inexpedient."

You may, indeed, at first find it a cross to pray in your family ; but this the grace of God will enable you to overcome. If you rely upon the teachings of the Spirit, you will soon learn the language of prayer. Let your expressions be simple, and your desires fervent. Simplicity and fervor are the great excellences in devotion. "O," said a young Christian, when asked how he enjoyed family prayer, " I could not get along without it." Do you ask, " How often shall I pray in my family ? " Every morning, immediately before or after breakfast, and, if possible, early in the evening, before exhausted with labor, so that the younger members of your family may hear you pray before they retire to rest. In the morning, we ought, with our families, to thank God for the mercies of the night, confess our sins and the sins of others, and ask for our-

selves and them his guidance and blessing through the day. In the evening, we should, in like manner, bless God for the mercies of the day, confess the sins of it, implore for ourselves and others spiritual blessings, and ask for divine protection through the watches of the night.

Be as regular and constant in your family devotions as is the sun in his course. Constancy in religious duties is a great excellency in Christian character. I know that some men, who profess religion, pray only occasionally in their families, on the Sabbath perhaps, and now and then during the week ; and some there are who neglect family worship and religious duties at the table altogether. O lamentable fact ! The examples of such professors I must entreat you not to follow. Rather follow the example of that venerable man, who, in addition to his daily closet duties, had not omitted, when in health, to pray in his family at least twice a day for forty years. I admire such examples of consistent piety, and delight to hold them up as patterns for im-

itation. Those who neglect family worship are by no means among the most consistent and spiritual members in our churches. By this neglect of duty, they injure themselves and families, displease their God and Saviour, dishonor their profession, and give the enemies of religion occasion to ask reproachfully, "What do ye more than others?" The excuse sometimes offered by this class of professors, that they have no ability to pray, is without foundation. If they will try in earnest, and persevere, God will help them. He has promised to do it. "Open thy mouth wide," saith Jehovah, "and I will fill it." Ps. 81: 10. The man who is endowed with the powers of speech, and blessed with common sense and piety, and who can talk fluently upon other subjects, can, if he will, learn to pray in his family to edification.

Where duty is concerned, never say, "I cannot;" but say, rather, "By the grace of God, I will try." I must urge you, moreover, never to neglect family prayer, because you are weary. Pray, if you can say no-

more than "God be merciful to us sinners." You may find in it great enjoyment. If you omit the duty once, for a reason apparently good, you may be tempted to neglect it again for one less weighty, and at length become quite irregular. A young man returned home one evening so exhausted that he thought he could not pray in his family. As, however, he had never omitted the duty, he concluded to try. While at prayer, he was favored with uncommon assistance, had sweet communion with God, and was greatly refreshed—so true it is that they who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.

I would advise you to kneel in devotion, and accustom your children to do so. This is a posture becoming a suppliant. Sitting in prayer, when we can kneel comfortably, seems to me disrespectful. Teach your children to behave with great seriousness in prayer, and to remember that the eye of God is upon them. A pious father, observing, while at prayer, that one of his little children was behaving improperly, stopped

in the midst of his devotions, and corrected the child, and then finished his prayer. You may think, perhaps, this borders on severity ; but that was one of the best trained families I ever knew. That child, I presume, never forgot that correction, and never needed to have it repeated. Those parents are now reaping the precious fruits of their fidelity in the orderly and Christian deportment of their children, as they arrive at years of maturity.

Let your prayers in the family be of a suitable length — not so short as to appear hurried and formal, nor so long as to be tedious ; and always accompany them with the reading of a portion of the sacred Scriptures. I would advise you to read the Bible in your family in course — a chapter in the morning from the Old Testament, and in the evening a similar portion from the New. You will find this an excellent help to devotion ; and in no other way, probably, will you derive so much benefit from the reading of these holy oracles.

Never omit praying in your family be-

cause strangers are present, or from a pressure of worldly business. This course would dishonor religion, and bring darkness into your own soul. It would show that you fear man and love the world more than you fear and love Jehovah. If strangers are present, let them hear you pour out your fervent supplications before God. It may do them good. Perhaps they are not accustomed to hear prayers at home. If business presses, pray the more on this account. You need help from above ; and in no other way will you be so likely to succeed in your worldly enterprise.

Your prayers around the domestic altar should vary according to the various circumstances and wants of your family, and the community and world around you. In every prayer, ask for the illumination and guidance of the Holy Spirit ; and by his assistance, and the mediation and intercessions of Jesus, your prayers will be accepted, and prevail with God.

It is a duty and privilege also, at our regular meals, three times a day, to look

up to God in a short prayer for his blessing upon ourselves and the fruits of his bounty. This practice, if pursued with right feelings, will remind us of our dependence, make us more devout and spiritual, direct our thoughts to the source of our blessings, and reflect honor upon our Christian profession. Our Saviour, when about to eat and to feed the multitude, asked a blessing upon the loaves and fishes ; (Matt. 14 : 19;) and the apostle Paul, on a wreck, before he and his companions partook of refreshment, offered a short prayer to God in presence of them all. Acts 27 : 35. Such examples you may safely follow. After we have been refreshed, also, with the fruits of God's bounty, it becomes us to offer unto him our grateful praise. This, as it seems to me, is the proper time for giving thanks at the table. " When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God." Deut. 8 : 10. " Were there not ten cleansed ? but where are the nine ? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this

stranger." Luke 17: 17, 18. In these passages, the duty of thanking God on receiving particular blessings is clearly expressed. "Commanding," says an apostle, "to abstain from meats, which God has created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God, and prayer." 1 Tim. 4: 3—5. On this point, I am inclined to ask for the old paths which our pious fathers pursued, and which are sanctioned by the word of God. Do you inquire why you may not give thanks mentally at the table? Simply because it will not edify your family: you are to be their mouth to God. Though we should never pray to be seen of men, there are times when, by an audible expression of our feelings, we are to let our light so shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven. Matt. 5: 16. Never omit religious duties at your table because

strangers are present, or on account of opposition from any quarter.

A young man, while in college, was invited to board in a family with a large number of impenitent students, and introduce religious duties at the table. Though he expected opposition, he accepted the invitation ; and as no one was required to tarry till the table was dismissed, all things for a time went on smoothly. At length he was informed by a kind friend that the boarders had combined together to break up religious duties at the table. Believing that he was in the path of duty, he committed his cause to God, and resolved, with divine assistance, not to be dislodged from his position. After trying various unsuccessful methods to effect their purpose, they all, one day, retired very suddenly from the table, and took a position where they might look in, undiscovered, upon this young man, who sat with his back towards the window, to see what he would do alone. When he had finished his meal, though unconscious of their design, he arose, as

usual, and audibly gave thanks to God. This went like a dagger to their hearts. Their outward opposition ceased. They behaved with propriety at the table, and treated him with kindness. Shortly after, a powerful revival commenced in college, in which the projectors of this plot were made the hopeful subjects of renewing grace ; and this young man, to the joy of his heart, was permitted to call upon them, in their turn, to assist him in the religious services of the table.

Now, had he been less conscientious, and retired from the table without expressing audibly his grateful sense of divine goodness, he would, in their estimation at least, have ruined both himself and the cause. The fact was, they expected him to pray, and respected him the more on this account ; and, when anxious to find the way of life, they most gladly resorted to him for instruction. “ Let us not be weary in well-doing,” says an apostle ; “ for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” Gal. 6: 9.

The unconverted expect you to be a Christian in all conditions ; and, to meet this expectation, you must be undeviatingly faithful in the discharge of Christian duty. Let it not be thought that these instructions are too specific. I have always found that loose, indefinite instruction makes loose and irregular Christians. A man of business, whose wife was pious, called upon me as a matter of courtesy ; and, after being repeatedly entreated to seek religion, immediately, in serious earnest, he promised to make the attempt, and retired. The Holy Spirit blessed the effort, and he was soon under deep convictions of sin. Shortly after, he called again, with a trembling hope that he had surrendered his heart to God, and asked, with great simplicity, "What more shall I do ?" "Live a life of faith and prayer, and be a growing, devoted Christian. Pray in your closet twice, and if possible three times, in a day. Read the Scriptures and pray in your family morning and evening ; and at your regular meals always ask a blessing upon your food, and

after eating, express to God your thanks for his mercies. These and other practical duties you must cheerfully and heartily perform, when in health, while you live." He complied with the advice, and commenced immediately his religious duties. If strangers were present, he would not omit them. If individuals called at these seasons to do business, he would wait upon his God first, and attend to them afterward. He and his large family were regularly in the house of God upon the Sabbath. At the monthly concert, and other meetings of the church, he was, if possible, always present, and ready to pray. Religion was his delight. It did not interfere with, but assisted him in, his other duties. He contributed liberally for the support of divine institutions, both at home and abroad. His influence was powerful. Most of his children, with their companions, became pious early, are steadfast members of the church, and are now bringing up their growing families in the fear of the Lord. Now, I can never regret that I gave that man

such specific instructions, or that he was inclined to follow them. O that our churches were filled with such Christians, and that the ministers of Jesus would give to young converts similar counsel !

It is possible, I admit, for one to go through the outward forms of religion without piety ; but if we possess piety, we must have with it the outward forms. If you follow the directions here given in respect to prayer, with proper feelings, you will find them eminently promotive of your growth in piety, and will derive from them great assistance in all your secular duties. While a few Christians were conversing together upon practical religion, one of them asked a poor young mechanic, who labored hard to support his family, " How often do you pray in a day ? " " Seven times," he modestly replied, " besides the religious services at my table." " But when do you pray seven times in a day ? " " Twice in my family, once with an afflicted relative, early in the morning, at noon, and early in the evening in my closet ; and

after the workmen have retired from my shop, I go out late in the evening to see that all things are safe, and then I kneel down and close the labors of the day with prayer." This was not a fitful movement, but his steady practice from month to month, amidst all his worldly avocations. Says the Psalmist, Seven times a day do I praise thee; (Ps. 119: 164;) and an apostle has directed believers to pray without ceasing; that is, to maintain habitually a spirit of prayer. 1 Thes. 5: 17.

Nor was this young mechanic satisfied with praying merely. His constant communion with God kept alive in his soul an impressive sense of eternal things. With Christians, religion was his theme and song. He sought out the impenitent also, and entreated them with affection and earnestness to embrace the Saviour. Though his habits of prayer were not known, there was no one in the church, except the pastor, to whom the anxious inquirer would resort so soon for instruction, or who was better qualified to guide him to the Lamb

of God. In a powerful revival with which the town was visited, he labored untiringly, and with gratifying success, to bring sinners to Christ. You may be desirous to know how he succeeded in his worldly enterprise. God prospered the labor of his hands. He is now, as men use the term, independent ; is doing a large and profitable business, and has an annual income of thousands. Go thou and do likewise.

CHAPTER VIII.

SOCIAL PRAYER.

And he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John, whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying.
Acts 12 : 12.

I PREFER to distinguish social prayer from that offered in the family, or in the great congregation, as it forms an important part of the service in those small assemblies where Christians and others meet for mutual edification. Social prayer is the union of several individuals in divine worship, where only one expresses to God, audibly, the desires of the whole ; and it has been practised by believers more or less in all ages.

The apostles and their associates often prayed together before that remarkable outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. When Peter was in prison, prayer was offered for him unceasingly in small assemblies, as well as in the closet. Acts

12: 12. Meetings for social prayer, if attended with a proper spirit, have a great influence in promoting the growth of piety in the soul. In them much effectual prayer is offered ; the graces of God's people are quickened ; the Saviour delights to visit them, and comfort and bless his chosen. " Where two or three are gathered together in my name," he observes, " there am I in the midst of them." Matt. 18: 20. The Holy Spirit also hovers around these little meetings for prayer, and diffuses through them his sanctifying and quickening influence. O, how sacred is that spot where Christians often meet for prayer ! and how fervently do those who visit it love one another ! Their hearts are one ; their aims and purposes one ; their sympathies are awakened, and in prayer their souls ascend in one little sanctified company to God.

These meetings for prayer and conference I hope you will habitually attend. If need be, rise earlier, and labor a little more diligently, to gain the time. I knew a man, in very moderate circumstances in

life, who, whether in the house or field, when the hour for prayer arrived, would drop his work and go. He was always there, and always ready to speak and pray. He loved to commune with God and his people ; and though endowed naturally with but ordinary powers, he was indeed the Lord's host. Such Christians are efficient helpers, both to the minister and to the church. If possible, go from your closet to these social meetings ; go praying, and invite the Saviour to go with you, and you will find his presence when pleading there.

At the commencement of your Christian course, let it be with you a settled principle never to refuse to lead in prayer, when called upon, or when an opportunity is presented. You must begin to pray audibly with others when young in the Christian life, or in all probability you will not begin at all. You may tremble at first, and speak with a stammering tongue ; but soon you will speak plainly, and to the edification of those who hear. The child

who begins to walk will totter at first, and perhaps fall ; but if he continues his efforts, he will soon be able to stand erect, and walk with the agility and firmness of a man. And so it is with the young Christian. He must, with divine assistance, learn to pray, as he learns other things, by practice. The fear of man bringeth a snare ; and this can be removed only by persevering effort.

The ability to pray in public with ease to yourself, and to the edification of others, will greatly promote your enjoyment and usefulness in the world. Both the spirit and the ability to pray acceptably, are, to be sure, the gift of God ; but they are a gift which, like all others, may be improved by practice. Observe how others pray, and commit to memory the fifty-first Psalm, and other portions of Scripture adapted to devotion. Make them perfectly familiar, and they will afford you appropriate language in prayer. But, above all, ask wisdom from above, and ask it in faith, nothing wavering. God is an infinite fountain

of light and grace, and gives liberally to those who believe. "What things soever ye desire when ye pray," says our Saviour, "believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Mark 11: 24. Receive the Holy Ghost, and speak as he shall give you utterance. The desires which he excites will be accepted of God. Let your prayers in social meetings be short. Long prayers in public grieve the Spirit. They produce in others weariness, impatience, and irritation ; and when the mind is irritated and vexed, the Spirit is grieved, and departs.

It is proper to use argument in prayer. Moses did so in behalf of rebellious Israel, and prevailed : "What will become of thy great name ?" said he ; "and how will the uncircumcised triumph ! " Daniel also pleads, — "O Lord, hear ! O Lord, forgive ! O Lord, hearken and do ! for thy city and thy people are called by thy name." Dan. 9: 19. It is always safe to plead the glory of God as an argument in prayer.

Learn to pray in these smaller meetings,

as elsewhere, with fervor. Prayer, to be effectual, must be fervent. The depth of your piety will depend materially upon the fervor of your prayers. A sinner pleading with God for the eternal life of the soul may well be in earnest. Fervent prayers edify the church. They kindle a flame of devotion in other bosoms which consumes the hay, wood, and stubble of this world. They stop not by the way, but go up with a mighty energy to the heart of God. They prevail in heaven. Most beautifully does Taylor describe fervent prayer: "The river that runs slow, and creeps by the banks, and begs leave of every turf to let it pass, is drawn into little hollows, and spreads itself into small portions, and dies with diversion; but when it runs with vigoroussness, and a full stream that breaks down every obstacle, making it even as its own brow, it stays not to be tempted with little avocations, and to creep into holes, but runs into the sea through full and useful channels. So is a man's prayer; if it moves upon the feet of an abated appetite,

and wanders into the society of every trifling accident, and stays at the corners of the fancy, and talks with every object it meets, it cannot arrive at heaven; but when it is carried upon the wings of passion and strong desires, a swift motion and a hungry appetite, it passes on through all the intermediate regions of chance, and stays not until it dwells at the foot of the throne, where mercy sits, and thence sends showers of holy refreshment."

And here I feel constrained to throw out a caution against indulging a kind of self-complacent feeling, sometimes called spiritual pride, produced by uncommon gifts in prayer or speaking, to which young Christians are peculiarly exposed. When, on one occasion, Bunyan had been uncommonly assisted in speaking, some one observed, "You have preached a wonderful sermon to-day." "Ah, yes," he replied; "the devil told me that, before I left the pulpit." The same kind of feeling the apostle Paul was liable to indulge, after he was favored with his remarkable revela-

tions; on which account a thorn in the flesh was given him, lest he should be exalted above measure. If at any time the thought enters your mind that you have offered a remarkable prayer, or made an excellent speech, and you begin to be elated on this account, reject it with the utmost abhorrence. Such feelings are exceedingly offensive to God; he cannot endure them. "God resisteth the proud." Under all circumstances, we have much occasion for humbleness of mind, but none for pride and vainglory. If you are blessed with uncommon powers or gifts, be humble and thankful; employ them to the best advantage, and give all the glory of your success to God.

A young man, somewhat gifted in prayer, once entered a social religious meeting, and, observing an infidel present, it occurred to him that, when his turn came to lead in devotion, he would pray with such power and eloquence as to confound, at least, if not convince, the infidel of the reality of religion. At length the expected opportu-

nity arrived, and he offered, as he supposed, a wonderful prayer; but the infidel remained an infidel still. On returning home, he was overtaken by a pious man, who was at the meeting; "and now," thought he, "I shall hear from this friend a high encomium upon my prayer." They went on together a short distance; but at length, while he was all expectation, this good man broke the silence, and observed, "Brother S., your prayer in the meeting this evening seemed to me like the bellowing of Antichrist." This rebuke, no less just than unexpected, struck him like a thunderclap. It crushed his pride; it made him ashamed of himself and his prayer. He could never forget it, and never needed to have it repeated. He afterwards became a faithful and successful minister of Christ.

Never absent yourself from a prayer-meeting for a trifling excuse, or become so stupid in religion as to neglect such meetings altogether. When you can treat religion and its Author with so much indifference as to say, with criminal apathy, "O, it

is nothing but a prayer-meeting," you may not only strongly suspect, but know for certainty, that your heart is not right, as it should be, in the sight of God. Indifferent to a meeting for divine worship, where Christ is present to sanctify the scene and make it an emblem of heaven, and give to his praying ones a comforting foretaste of their reward and their rest! Impossible, if you feel as Jesus did; impossible, if you are begotten again to a lively hope, and are marching with a vigorous step to that inheritance which is incorruptible, and undefiled, and eternal in the heavens. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." Heb. 10: 25.

"Prayer is the Christian's vital breath;
The Christian's native air;
His watchword at the gate of death—
He enters heaven with prayer."

It is an excellent plan, also, for the sisters of the church to meet by themselves, if possible, once a week for religious con-

versation, singing the praises of God, and for prayer ; "speaking to yourselves," says an apostle, "in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Eph. 5 : 19. If you are a young sister in Christ, I must urge you to connect yourself immediately with such a circle of praying believers, and be always ready to lead in prayer, or disclose your feelings, when an opportunity is presented. These meetings for prayer among the sisters of the church have a vast influence in developing and perfecting Christian character. In them the social feelings are cultivated, and a bond of union formed which can never be broken. In them they learn to pray together ; in them also they may spread out the cases of individuals before God, and by communicating freely their trials and joys, and holding up to view the divine promises, they become mutual helpers to each other in their way to heaven.

It may be proper, at the close of this chapter, to add a few considerations on

wandering thoughts or distractions in prayer. These are great hindrances to devotion. All pious people probably experience more or less trouble from this cause. If we analyze our devotions, and remove from them every improper thought and feeling, we shall find but little left which can properly be denominated effectual prayer. "I could live forever in prayer," says Martyn, "if I could always speak to God." When, by wandering thoughts, the mind is diverted from the object of worship, our prayer is not offered to God. It is idle mockery, the mere service of the lips, so offensive to Jehovah, while the heart is pursuing earthly vanities. On this point, my own experience is truly mournful. I have often thought that my prayers will be the most solemn part of my final account to God. It is strange, indeed, that a soul renewed by divine grace, with the amazing realities of eternity before it, and a God of holiness and love as the object of worship, should, when engaged in prayer, be drawn away from this glorious object

by the empty trifles of this perishing world. But so it is. We are of the earth, earthly; our carnal minds cleave to the dust. Says an apostle, "When I would do good, evil is present with me. For I find a law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." Rom. 7 : 23. As we are sanctified but in part, the plans and pursuits of life often rush into the mind, even in our most solemn approaches to God. Against these you will need to watch always, and pray unceasingly. The power of association also has a vast influence in producing distractions in prayer. Here, again, you will need to set a special guard. Satan, moreover, takes the advantage of our remaining corruptions, and, by suggesting evil thoughts to the mind, breaks that golden chain of devotion which should bind the soul indissolubly to the infinite object of its worship and love.

For these distractions in prayer, in which you will have more or less experience, I

know of but one effectual remedy ; and that is, " to be filled with the Spirit." Without this all other directions will be of little avail, and with it none others will be needed. When the soul is so filled with the Spirit as to be completely under his control, our desires in prayer ascend, as Jeremy Taylor has expressed it, "in a right line to God." Like a mighty stream, that tarries not by the way, but breaks down opposing barriers, they are poured unobstructedly into the great ocean above. If you wish to know how this large measure of divine influence may be secured, I must refer you to the directions in chapter fourth, which I hope you will read often, with self-application and earnest prayer.

CHAPTER IX.

PERSONAL EFFORTS FOR THE SALVATION OF SINNERS.

He that winneth souls is wise. Prov. 11:30.

THE church on earth is to be built up by personal as well as by associated effort. "Occupy till I come," is the direction of Christ to all who enter his spiritual vineyard. You are a young Christian ; you have been redeemed at an infinite price — the precious blood of Jesus. The Spirit of God has converted you, that you may "live, henceforth, not unto yourself, but unto him who died for you and rose again." 2 Cor. 5:15. You are never to be idle ; there is enough to do. The field is the world, and you are to cultivate it for Christ. Remember that sinners around you have immortal souls. They are going to judgment ; they may die in a moment, and enter that fire which will never go out. Christ expects you to labor for their salvation. He con-

verted you mainly for this purpose. Love for souls should constrain you to do it. You must not be willing to go to heaven alone ; you must labor daily to win souls to Christ, and have around you a noble company as your joy and crown in the day of the Lord Jesus. As soon as Saul of Tarsus was converted, he went to work for his divine Master, and labored hard in his service until death. Love to souls urged him to action ; and by his personal efforts he saved a vast multitude from the woes of the second death. Harlan Page could say, on his death-bed, that, by the grace of God, he had been instrumental in the conversion of at least one hundred sinners. Such examples are worthy of your imitation.

Remember, too, for your encouragement, that “ he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.” James 5 : 20. Perhaps you are ready to ask, What can I do to save the impenitent ? Pray for them often, and fervently ; exhibit before them a pious example ; throw

around them a holy influence ; speak to them kindly upon personal religion ; urge them, with a feeling heart, to "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." You may get their ear ; you may reach their heart. God is with you. "A word spoken in season, how good it is!" You will never know what you can do for the conversion of sinners before you try. Say not that you are too young to converse with them. A few words spoken to an infidel by a little child, were the means of his conversion ; and that converted infidel is now actively employed in the service of Christ.

Excuse not yourself from personal effort because you are poor or illiterate. None are too poor, illiterate, or obscure to labor in their proper spheres in the service of Christ. Remember that the man who wrapped up his one talent in a napkin, lost his soul. You have an influence ; and that influence should be employed for the good of man and the glory of God. **A poor young man went into a place at a time**

when the people appeared to be in a deep spiritual sleep. He wished to do good, but knew not how or where to begin. He called upon the minister for advice, but was repulsed with coldness. With a timid spirit, he ventured to speak with a few individuals on the subject of religion, and found two young men who were ready to listen. He invited them to his room ; they came. He conversed with them freely, and found them deeply impressed with a sense of their condition as impenitent sinners. For a long time, they had been anxious to find the way of life, but knew not how to disclose their feelings. No one sought them out, or appeared to care for their souls. He directed them to Christ, and commended them to God in prayer. Shortly after, they both were enabled to believe in Jesus, and found peace to their troubled spirits. In due time, they entered publicly into covenant with God and his people ; and one of them for years has been a pillar and an officer in the church, and the other a missionary to the

heathen. "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Ps. 126 : 6.

If you have entered the service of Christ late in life, you must on this account labor the harder. All your past years have been spent in sin. How sad the thought! Improve diligently the short remnant that remains; be up and doing; gird on the whole armor of righteousness; be fervent in spirit. Labor for Christ while you can. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." Ps. 126 : 5. Your sun is setting. Win some souls to Jesus before you die.

Are you a wealthy young Christian? Excuse not yourself from personal effort on this account. Remember Him who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich. 2 Cor. 8 : 9. Your wealth is the gift of God. It gives you an influence to do good. For this influence you are accountable. You must employ it for the glory of God and the good of souls. Christ, when on

earth, labored hard. "My Father worketh hitherto," said he, "and I work." John 5: 17. "Charge them that are rich in this world that they do good ; that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." 1 Tim. 6: 17—19.

O, we greatly need working Christians in this world of sin ! One such man as Harlan Page, or J. B. Taylor, is the Lord's host in a church. And what might not our churches accomplish, if all their members were like them in depth of piety and energy of Christian character ! And such in spirit and effort we may all be, and ought to be, in the whole extent of our pilgrimage to the rest and felicity of heaven.

Some nominal Christians get into the church, and sit down cold and motionless as a marble statue. With such I hope you will not sympathize. Keep in your bosom an enlightened, well-trained conscience,

and obey it when it speaks. You will find it a safe and useful companion. Always have one or more individuals in your mind, for whose salvation you will pray daily, and labor with untiring effort, until they are converted or dead, or you are removed from the scene of action. I remember reading in a Latin book, "Perseverance conquers all things." A higher authority assures us that you shall reap, if you faint not — reap souls which in glory shall outshine the sun.

There is a great deal implied in those two words, — "faint not." We often lose the blessing because we faint through unbelief. In your attempts to win sinners to Christ, imitate the Spanish monk, who went to an individual fourteen times, though repulsed with reproachful words and heavy blows, and at last gained his object. A young man experienced religion at the age of seventeen, and immediately set his heart upon the salvation of a beloved brother. He prayed for him daily, and often in his closet. He followed him not only with

prayers, but with affectionate letters, entreaties, and warnings, for ten long years, though apparently to no good effect. His brother grew worse and worse, became exceedingly profane, disregarded the Bible and Sabbath, and hardened his heart against God and his people. At length this praying young man was cut off from active life by affliction, and confined to a sick room. Under these circumstances his brother visited him. The meeting was one of deep and solemn interest. He gave him what he regarded as his last warning, and prayed with him. It was a melting scene ; his brother wept, and having solemnly promised him that he would immediately seek religion, he left the room. The Holy Spirit blessed this last effort to his conversion. He was soon visited with the most pungent convictions of sin, and pressed into the dust under a sense of his amazing guilt. At length light from above broke in upon his soul ; he was brought clearly into the liberty of the gospel, became a most devoted Christian, and for many years

has been an active and useful member of the visible church.

Effectual prayer leads to successful action. Attempt great things for Christ, and you will see great things. Expect success in the path of duty. Have faith in God: all things are possible to them that believe. If you approach the impenitent in the spirit of meekness and love, you will generally find them more ready to listen, than you are to speak to them upon the subject of religion. Not unfrequently you will find them in a state of great religious anxiety, and earnestly desiring to speak with a follower of Jesus. A pious minister, observing a youth at work alone in a field, leaped over the fence, and, walking up to him, spoke to him affectionately upon the importance of seeking religion. The young man immediately burst into tears. He was all ready to receive instruction, and only wanted some one to direct him to the Lamb of God. I once conversed with a person from whom I expected opposition, or total indifference to the subject of religion. To my

surprise, I found her in great anxiety for her salvation. For months she had been impressed with a sense of sin, but was afraid to disclose her feelings. Her mind was dark ; she knew not what to do. I gave her such instruction as her case seemed to require, and prayed with her. In a short time, she was enabled to give up her heart to God, and found the Saviour to be precious. Now, had not some one conversed with her, and brought out those suppressed feelings, she might have struggled on for weeks, grieved the Spirit, and gone back to a state of stupidity.

It is decidedly best to converse with the sinner on personal religion alone. He will feel less embarrassed, and disclose his feelings much more freely. Common sense and common discretion, with the grace of God, will direct you when, how, and under what circumstances, to speak. With a heart imbued with love to God and to souls, and filled with the Holy Ghost, you will find no serious difficulty in speaking to any one upon the subject of religion.

If treated coldly, be not discouraged ; if repulsed, bear it patiently ; if insulted, pray the more, but persevere. You have truth, God, and the sinner's conscience, on your side. A young man once cursed me to my face. At another interview, he was not only ready to listen, but humble enough to ask me, with deep emotion, what he should do to be saved. He afterward became an able and successful minister of Christ. At a time which appeared to me favorable, I conversed with a thoughtless sinner upon the duty of becoming a follower of Jesus. She laughed at the thought. She had no idea of being a Christian. I pressed upon her the duty of immediate repentance, with every argument I could command ; but she withheld them all. "Have I said enough ?" "You have." "Should you see me at the day of judgment on the right hand of Christ, and find yourself on the left, could you reproach me with having been unfaithful ?" "I could not." After commanding her to God in prayer, I left her with this remark : "I hope that before three

days you will be in such distress on account of sin, as to send for me to know what you shall do to be saved." God blessed the effort. She was awakened, and on the third day I was requested to visit her. I did so, and found her a hopeful subject of renewing grace. She persevered in her Christian course, and for years has been a worthy member of the church of Christ. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." Eccl. 11: 6.

Is your partner in life unconverted? You have a great work to do for him, and must not rest until it be accomplished. Let him see, in your daily deportment, a most beautiful exemplification of the religion of Jesus. Be heavenly minded. The power of a consistent Christian example is wonderful. An infidel, who was blessed with an eminently pious wife, observed that he believed his wife had the right religion, though he saw it in no one else. Pray for

your companion without ceasing. Expect his conversion. A mother in Israel observed to me that she had prayed in her closet for the conversion of her husband twice and three times a day, and often in an agony, for thirty years, besides spending occasionally whole days in fasting and prayer on his account. God heard the voice of her weeping. Her beloved husband was converted, lived for several years a life of devoted piety, and died in the triumphs of faith. O, there is an amazing power in importunate, persevering prayer! God is faithful to his promises.

"It shan't be said that praying breath
Was ever spent in vain."

"I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain." Isa. 45: 19. "Hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" Num. 23: 19. God sometimes delays the blessing, to prove his people, and to glorify himself in trying their faith and patience. Though the blessing "tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come; it will not

tarry." Hab. 2: 3. Be careful, however, to wait for it in unwavering faith, strong expectation, and prevailing prayer.

Are you a parent, with a young family under your care? Your station is immensely important, and your responsibilities great. Your children are to live forever. They have depraved hearts, and must be converted, or be lost. They may, and ought to be, converted when young. You are to mould their mind, and shape their course, for eternity. It will depend upon you mainly, under God, whether your children be happy in heaven, or miserable in hell, forever. Begin early to train them for another world. But do you ask how you shall do it? A godly mother had two lovely sons. She earnestly desired to see them converted when young; and what did she do? "I laid them down," said she, "at the feet of Jesus; and there I left them, resolving in my heart never to take them from that sacred spot." There she met them, wept over them, counselled and prayed for them; and there, when

young, they believed in Jesus. One of them became an able minister, and the other a pious physician. Another praying mother, who saw her large family of children converted when young, was asked how she trained them. "When I washed them," she replied, "I prayed that they might be washed in the blood of Jesus; when I dressed them, I asked that they might be clothed in the righteousness of Christ; and when I fed them, I besought my heavenly Father to feed them with the bread of life." Are you a mother? Go thou and do likewise. Often take your young children with you to some retired place, and kneel down and pray with them. Accustom them to kneel with you at the Saviour's feet. A child will never forget a mother's prayers. A young man was once awakened, and brought to believe in Christ, by looking to the corner of the room, where he had often seen his mother kneel and commend him to God in prayer. Her voice had long been hushed in death, but her fervent prayers he could never forget.

If you wish your children to be converted, subdue their tempers when young. Never allow them to disobey your reasonable commands, or to treat you in any way with disrespect. Those who are thoroughly subdued in the nursery, will yield much more readily to the authority of God. The child who habitually disobeys his parents, is on the high road to ruin, both temporal and eternal. Disobedience to parental authority hardens the heart to rebel against God: I once conversed with a young lady who was feeble in health, and expected to die. She was alarmed in view of her condition as an impenitent sinner. But when I urged her to repent immediately, and submit to Christ, she replied, "I can't, I can't." This was all I could get from her. The fact was, she was accustomed to say so to her parents; and now, when God, in his word, and by his providence and Spirit, commanded her to repent and believe in Jesus, she could say so to him. Fasten in the minds of your children, when young, the great principles

of revealed religion. Speak to them often of God and Christ, sin and holiness, death and judgment, heaven and hell. When these fundamental truths are impressed deeply upon the heart, they act with mighty power to awaken the conscience, and bring the sinner to Christ. My mother taught me, when a child, that all liars shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death ; and this truth, fastened in my memory, did more to deter me from lying, and lead me early to embrace the Saviour, than all the sermons I heard under twelve years of age.

Unremitted exertion and fervent prayer for the good of others, will promote your growth in grace and spiritual enjoyment. Whether those for whom you labor are benefited or not, you will receive a blessing. You will clear your own skirts of the blood of souls, enjoy the approbation of conscience, and the favor of God. President Edwards, I think, somewhere remarks, that Christian assurance is obtained more

by activity than by self-examination. O, there is a wonderful blessedness in laboring hard, and praying earnestly, for the salvation of others! While I was fitting for college at Philips Academy, Andover, two pious young men agreed to pray one evening, each in his own closet, three hours in succession, for two youth in the school, who were exceedingly depraved. A few days after, one of them said to the other, "Brother C., how did you enjoy your season of prayer the other evening?" "O, very much," replied he. "When the time arrived, I knelt down to pray, and continued in supplication about half an hour, and then began to feel dull and sleepy. I arose from my knees, opened the Bible, and read a short time, and then knelt down again to pray, and continued in prayer, as I supposed, about thirty minutes, and arose again; and looking at my watch, found, to my surprise, that I had been praying more than three hours. The next day," continued he, "I was wonderfully blessed. My soul was so lifted above the world, and

filled with heavenly joys, that I could not look at my Latin books." That season of prayer, and of divine refreshing, he will never forget; and whether those youth were benefited or not, he had deeper experience in the things of God, and learned from it a lesson of heavenly wisdom. That young man has been for many years a missionary to the Sandwich Islands; and if his companions in labor are accustomed, like him, to wrestle with God in prayer, we cannot wonder that those islands have been visited with such remarkable outpourings of the Holy Spirit.

Let me exhort you, therefore, to aim steadily to glorify God in winning souls to Christ; to pray without ceasing; to be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. 1 Cor. 15: 58.

CHAPTER X.

BENEVOLENCE.

The liberal deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand. Isa. 32: 8.

THE spiritual Christian is always benevolent. He possesses, in some degree, the feelings of his Father in heaven. God is a being of infinite benevolence. He delights to do good ; his resources are boundless ; he is always bestowing blessings upon his creatures on earth ; he causes his sun to shine and his rain to descend alike upon the just and the unjust ; he does good to all, “and his tender mercies are over all his works.” Ps. 145 : 9. “He gives us all things richly to enjoy,” filling our hearts with food and gladness. True believers are the children of God, and are required to imitate him in his benevolence. “Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children, and walk in love.” Eph. 5 : 1, 2. As the dear children of God, then, we are to follow him, according to our ability, in

his acts of doing good. This is our duty and privilege, and the highest honor which God can bestow, or we enjoy. O, there is a luxury in doing good, which can be known only by experience ! You are a young Christian in a wonderful day, a day of Christian activity and growing benevolence. The world is to be converted to Christ, and he is on his way to take possession of his kingdom. But the gospel must first be preached to all nations, and the church on earth is to be the great instrument of publishing to the world these glad tidings of great joy. You are a part of that church ; you have been brought into the kingdom of grace to do good ; you are required to love your neighbor as yourself. Matt. 22 : 39. "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets." Matt. 7 : 12. "But to do good, and to communicate, forget not ; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." Heb. 13 : 16. You see, therefore, that in doing good by

your prayers, influence, or property, you please God ; and remember that “his favor is life, and his loving kindness better than life.”

The Jews were required to give one tenth of their income to the Lord ; and when they brought their tithes cheerfully and punctually into his storehouse, he blessed them greatly in the labor of their hands. It is said of a benevolent man in Ireland, “that he gave by shovelsfull, and the Lord shovelled it back again.” Covetousness is a great sin. It is every where condemned in the Bible. “Thou shalt not covet,” is a divine command. Ex. 20 : 17. A covetous spirit is despised by every body except the miser, and he can endure it in no one but himself. In the Christian, redeemed by the blood of Jesus, saved by grace, and expecting an eternal weight of glory as the free gift of his God and Saviour, it is more than despicable ; it is criminal and hateful in the extreme. A missionary now at the Sandwich Islands, before he left his native land, sat down by a dea-

con of a church, who was probably worth his thousands, to enlist his feelings, if possible, in the missionary cause. After he had conversed with him a long time, and fancied he had awakened some interest, he arose to depart. "Stop, stop," said the deacon, "I believe I must contribute something to your cause." And going to his money-drawer, he took out a ninepence and gave to the missionary, as the amount of what he, at that time, was willing to give, to save six hundred millions of heathen from an endless hell. With the benevolence of such Christians, I hope you will not sympathize; but say, rather, with pious Jacob, "O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honor, be not thou united." Gen. 49:6.

A man embarked in a fine ship for a foreign country, whose appearance was such as led the ship's company to suppose that he was a man of wealth and distinction. During the voyage, he had the misfortune to fall overboard. A noble-hearted sailor leaped into the ocean, and, by a vigorous

effort, kept him from sinking until help could reach him from the ship. With much difficulty they got him on board, and attempted, by suitable applications, to restore that life which seemed, just before, almost extinct. As they stood around him, he opened his eyes, and exclaimed, "Where is the man who put his life in jeopardy for my sake, and rescued me from a watery grave?" They pointed to the sailor:—"Come here, my noble fellow, that I may reward you." And while all were in high expectation, to see what this wealthy man would do for his benefactor, he put his hand into his pocket, and feeling all around it, took out, at length, a fourpence-half-penny and offered him, as a consideration for his disinterested and perilous effort. The generous sailor rejected it with disdain, and was strongly tempted to throw him overboard again, as being unworthy of a place among the living.

This is a striking illustration of the condition and spirit of a class of professed Christians. They had fallen overboard,

or rather had plunged into an ocean of guilt, through which they were sinking to a fire that shall never go out. The Lord Jesus beheld their danger, and leaving his throne of glory, plunged into that ocean, rescued them from sin and hell, and restored them to life and safety. Having delivered them from a death so dreadful, and given them a sure title to immortal life and felicity, he expects from them corresponding returns of gratitude and love. What, then, must be his feelings, when, by his servants, he goes to those whom he redeemed by his blood, blessed with an abundance of earthly good, and finds them willing to give only a mere pittance to save vast multitudes from that same endless death to which they were exposed, and put them in possession of that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory which they have in certain prospect, through the interposition of his sovereign and unmerited grace? Whenever, therefore, you are called upon to give any thing to the cause of Jesus, reflect upon the price paid for your own redemption, and be willing to contribute accordingly.

The religion of Christ will never flourish in a covetous heart. It will languish for want of nourishment, and appear like a plant in an arid soil, stunted and withered, and without beauty and comeliness. Cultivate, then, a benevolent spirit. It is pleasing to God ; Jesus delights in it ; saints and angels admire it ; the great and the good on earth approve of it. In giving liberally to others, you will reap yourself a precious harvest of consolation.

“It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath. It is twice blessed :
It blesses him that gives and him that takes.”

If you are constitutionally covetous, you must overcome this propensity by the grace of God. The process is simple ; — give often and liberally, and you will soon subdue it. Do you say, “I am poor ?” So was the widow in the days of our Saviour ; but she gave liberally, even all she had. Christ commended her for it ; and her example has been held up, as an object of universal admiration, from that day to the present. Two mites, cast into the treasury of the Lord, may do great things.

Some years ago, there lived in the alms-house in my native town a poor blind woman, very aged, and eminently pious. On a certain Sabbath, she heard Dr. Payson preach, it is said, in behalf of the Bible Society. Her spirit was stirred within her. She longed to do something to send that blessed Bible, which she prized so highly, to the destitute. But what could she do, dependent, as she was, upon others for her daily food? She had four cents at her command, and a little thread, worth two cents more. She therefore most cheerfully cast six cents, all she had, into the treasury of the Lord. This fact was communicated to Dr. Payson. He was delighted with it; and, as he passed along in his agency, he related it, with surprising effect, to open hearts which his own touching eloquence and power of argument failed to reach. He would thrill a whole congregation by simply relating, in his impressive style, the fact of the poor blind woman in the alms-house. Her example operated as the most powerful eloquence to open the heart; and

hundreds, if not thousands, of Bibles were put into the hands of the destitute through her instrumentality. I once stated this fact to my congregation, in pleading for one of the benevolent societies. It went with great power to the heart. The next day, I called upon a family from whom I did not expect to obtain any thing. The lady of the house met me with the money in her hand, and observed, "I resolved yesterday to give at least as much as the poor blind woman." The blind woman's pittance, however, did not satisfy her. "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth?" James 3 : 5. This good woman died, and went to her everlasting rest; but her example still lives upon the earth to do good. "She being dead yet speaketh."

Contribute cheerfully to all the great objects of Christian benevolence, remembering that "God loveth a cheerful giver." 2 Cor. 9 : 7. An agent for the Tract Society called on a benevolent lady, and having made known to her his object,—"I am glad to see you," she exclaimed, "for I have had,

for several weeks, fifteen dollars laid by for your cause, and have been asking the Lord to send some one along to take it." Upon such a spirit God will smile. I hope you will always treat the accredited agents of the great objects of Christian benevolence with peculiar kindness. Their work is hard and difficult, and they need the sympathies and cheerful coöperation of God's people. Rejoice to see them. Be thankful that you have another opportunity to contribute to the cause of your ascended Redeemer. Do not conclude hastily that you have nothing to give. If you have no money at command, perhaps you can give something else. A very benevolent man was once called upon to contribute something to a charitable object; and as he had no money by him, he went to his closet and took out a silver tankard, worth thirty dollars, and gave that. Some time after, he died, and entered, we doubt not, into the joy of his Lord. And think you that he now regrets that act, as he looks abroad upon that glorious inheritance purchased

for him by the blood of Jesus, and sings, in heavenly rapture, the allelujahs of the redeemed?

Have you nothing to give? Think again. Look at your jewelry, and articles of dress or furniture, which might be appropriated to a far nobler purpose. Do such things accelerate your progress to heaven? Do they make you more humble and meek, more prayerful and heavenly-minded, more, in a word, like the Lord Jesus? Are you quite sure that this is the very best way to spend money in the nineteenth century, when the command meets your eye, "Preach the gospel to every creature?" Will the day of judgment approve it? If not, pluck them off, and convert them into tracts, and Bibles, and printing-presses, and send them abroad to tell the story of the cross to the millions who are perishing in sin. We are admonished in Scripture not to adorn ourselves with gold, or pearls, or costly array, but with that which far more becomes those who profess godliness — with good works. 1 Tim. 2: 9, 10. If you

have nothing to give, be careful that your will is right; for "a willing mind is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." 2 Cor. 8:12. It is an old proverb, however, that "where there is a will, there is a way." A poor woman who was ardently pious, on hearing some benevolent object presented, had a strong desire to contribute to it at least the widow's mite. She went home and searched the house, but could find nothing. She was greatly distressed. She knew not how to be denied the privilege of casting a little into the treasury of the Lord. She entered her closet, and prayed earnestly that God would make her submissive, if it was clearly his will that she should give nothing. On leaving her closet, she went into a back apartment, and spying a little bag of dried seeds, she took them down, and thought to herself, that, perhaps, some one might like to purchase them. Just at this moment her minister came in. She disclosed to him her feelings, and showed him the seeds. He took them, and

observed that he was going over the river, and perhaps he might sell them. On his way he met a brother in the ministry, who invited him to address a missionary meeting that evening. He consented to do so ; and, in the midst of his address, he told the touching story of the poor woman, and presented her bag of seeds for sale to the audience. A gentleman arose and offered five dollars for them. He took the seeds and offered them for sale again. Another person offered five dollars for them ; and thus they proceeded until they had obtained twenty dollars for the bag of seeds. The minister took the money, and carrying it to the woman, spread out four five-dollar bills before her as the avails of her seeds. She was overwhelmed under a sense of divine goodness, and most cheerfully gave the whole to the Lord.

Here you see what God can do for those who are so anxious to give that they are constrained to pray for submission when denied the privilege. He can open fountains in the desert, and streams in dry

places. "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth. The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." Prov. 11:24, 25. Let me exhort you, also, to sympathize with the afflicted, and be kind to the poor. As Burke has said of Howard, "Enter the abodes of human wo, and take the gauge and dimensions of misery, depression, and contempt." Such a course is pleasing to God. It will have a happy influence upon your own spirit; it will tend to deepen your piety, and show you how much reason you have to be grateful for your own superior comforts. "Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble." Ps. 41:1. "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again." Prov. 19:17. "For with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again." Luke 6:38. Here God declares, repeatedly, that he will repay you for all you do for his afflicted ones. He is both able and

willing to do it. Can you not trust him? He is a being of inviolable veracity. He never trifles with his creatures. He means what he says. Take him at his word, and you will find him faithful and true to his promises. "If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul, then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday. And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones; and thou shalt be like a watered garden and like a spring of water whose waters fail not." Isa. 58: 10, 11.

If poor yourself, you have nothing to fear while pursuing the path of duty. "Trust in the Lord and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." Ps. 37: 3. Hardness of heart in a professed Christian, or indifference to the distresses of others, is exceedingly offensive to God. If you indulge such feelings, he will visit your transgressions with a rod, and your iniquity with stripes." "If thou forbear to deliver them

that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain ; if thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not ; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it ? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it ? and shall not he render to every man according to his works ? ” Prov. 24 : 11, 12.

The direction of our Saviour is, “ Give, and it shall be given unto you, good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom.” Luke 6 : 38. Here, as elsewhere, a most precious promise is connected with the command, and its fulness shows how God is accustomed to give. If you will try the experiment with a cheerful and firm reliance upon the divine promises, you will find, as did the children of Israel, that no good thing will fail of all which your Redeemer has promised. I love to watch the providence of God, and observe how mysteriously he moves in this way to fulfil his word. A minister of Christ was once cut off from his labors, and confined for years to a sick room, unable to do any thing for

his support. His circumstances constrained him to live by faith. At one time, he received a letter from a friend enclosing ten dollars, which he laid by for his own use. Shortly after, he learned from a religious paper that some of our home missionaries were in great distress, and scarcely able to obtain a sufficient quantity even of the most ordinary food for the support of themselves and families. His heart was moved ; he wept in view of their trials ; and although he himself had lived for years upon bread and water, he resolved to send them immediately five dollars toward their relief, and trust the Lord for the supply of his own temporal wants ; remembering "the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." Acts 20 : 35. He accordingly enclosed the money in a letter to the secretary of the Massachusetts Domestic Missionary Society, in which he expressed his tender sympathies for his afflicted brethren. This letter, without his knowledge or name, was published in the Boston Recorder. Soon

after, he spent some weeks in that city, to try further experiments in regard to his health. While there, he was visited by a lady with whom he had been formerly acquainted, and who, on leaving, put into his hand a five dollar bill. "I took the Recorder," said she, "containing a letter, which I suppose came from you, and showed it to a wealthy lady boarding in the family, and observed to her, 'I suppose that letter came from Mr. ——, who is now in the city.' Having read the letter, she went to her secretary, and took out a five dollar bill, saying, 'Give that to Mr. ——, but withhold my name.'" The poor man received it thankfully, as the gift of his heavenly Father, and was deeply affected to see how soon his Saviour had literally fulfilled the promise, "Give, and it shall be given unto you."

Look, now, at the happy result of this simple act of trust in God. This afflicted minister had the blessedness of affording relief to the distressed missionaries; they, the comfort of receiving it; that benevolent

lady the satisfaction of doing good ; and God had all the glory. Now, had this poor man exercised a little more faith, and given ten dollars instead of five, as he was strongly inclined to do, the blessing, no doubt, would have been double both to himself and others. But this was not all. The promise is, “good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom.” And so it literally proved ; for, shortly after, another lady called upon him, and, on leaving, put into his hand half an eagle ; and about the same time a pious young lawyer made him a visit, and, after free conversation and prayer, he gave him two gold pieces more. Thus you see, in his case, a literal fulfilment of the Saviour’s promise. O, how faithful and kind is our Father in heaven to those who trust him ! “No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” Learn, then, to do good and communicate to the utmost of your power, even in the depths of poverty and distress, humbly trusting in God, and your barrel of meal shall not fail.

If he sees not best always literally to fulfil his promise, he will secure to you the blessing in some other way. How easy it is for him to smile upon your person, to bless your family with health, and prosper the labor of your hands ! One seasonable shower of rain is often worth hundreds of dollars. Remember that health and reason, rain and sunshine, are the Lord's ; and he can give or withhold them at his pleasure.

I shall mention but one passage more : “Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days.” Eccl. 11: 1. The spirit of benevolence is here inculcated by an allusion to the practice, in rice countries, of casting the seed upon the water while the land is yet overflowed ; and when the water disappears, the seed, having sunk into the earth, springs up and yields a plentiful harvest.

The sentiment of this passage is so beautifully illustrated by a fact that I recently met with, that I cannot forbear to introduce it in this place, hoping that others will be encouraged to do likewise. “In

one of the fertile vales and retired towns in England, some years ago, resided a benevolent lady, who, in the midst of her toils, had not forgotten 'the one thing needful.' In the all-wise dispensations of Providence, this excellent woman was laid on the bed of death. About that time the missionary cause was coming into notice, and, just before her decease, she called her daughter to her bedside, and said, 'Here are twenty pounds. I wish to give them to the missionary cause ; and, depend upon it, you will never have reason to be sorry for having given them.' 'After my mother's death,' says the daughter, 'I took the money, and gave it as directed by her, not thinking that ever that cause would bring comfort to myself.' But the daughter, who inherited no small share of her mother's spirit, at length had a son, who, as he grew up, gave evidence of feelings as opposite to those of his mother and grandmother, as can well be imagined. As this youth approached manhood, he became very profigate, and brought great trouble upon his

mother. He threw off all regard for his friends, forsook them, and entered the army, and vanished from their knowledge. At length the providence of God brought him to India: here, after some time, he fell into the company of a missionary. The man of God dealt faithfully with him; he became much impressed, and at length his convictions mastered his conscience and subdued his heart, and he gave satisfactory evidence that a work of grace was begun.

"After a trial of his steadfastness, the missionary procured his discharge from the army, and took him under his own care. Soon he became satisfied of his piety, zeal, and talents, and encouraged him to dedicate himself to the missionary work. As soon as an opportunity offered, he wrote to his afflicted mother, stating the great change that had taken place; and this was accompanied with entreaties for her forgiveness. When she read of her profligate son's repentance, and his prayer for her forgiveness, she exclaimed, 'Forgive you,

my son ! O, how easy it is to forgive you !’ What feelings came over the good woman, when she thought of her dying mother and the twenty pounds ! There was an answer to many prayers. It was the Lord’s doing, and marvellous in her eyes.

“ The good woman had a younger son. Henry — for that was his name — became insnared, and fell into bad habits, and resolved to go to India. All this took place before any information of the fate of the first son reached the family. The announcement of his resolution to go, saddened his mother’s heart — one already lost to her, and a second treading in his steps ! All that a mother could do, she did : she wept and prayed, she entreated, but all in vain. The youth was resolved ; she gave him up as lost to his family, but as still in the hands of a merciful God. He sailed, and arrived in India without knowing what had befallen his brother, or even what part of the world he might be in.

“ This youth had not been long in India before he came in contact with some of the

missionaries. After a short time, there was a decided change of heart and conduct. Soon after this change, his health rapidly declined. In this situation he was attended by the missionaries, who earnestly sought the peace of his mind and the good of his soul ; and they had a rich reward for their labor. While this younger brother was sick, the elder, who knew nothing of what had transpired, and who resided several hundred miles distant, had occasion to come to the place where his younger brother was. He did not know that he was in India, but a kind Providence directed his steps to the place where his brother was now dying. Having himself become a missionary, he was intimate with the brethren of this station, and soon became acquainted with the case of this youth. He was greatly surprised at the discovery that this person, to whom their instruction had been so great a blessing, was his own brother. The eldest continued to the last to administer all the comfort, for body and soul, which was in his power. At length

the younger brother died ; and the surviving brother, who had written some time before to his mother the account of his own conversion, and also respecting his brother's illness, of their meeting, and of his brother's change of heart, now sent a third letter to his mother, to announce his peaceful end. This last letter was sent by a person going to England. The former letter the elder son had sent, respecting himself, had been delayed on its passage. The last-written letter, stating the death of Henry, arrived the day after that first mentioned. The person having it took it to the good woman, and said, 'I have brought letters from your son in India.' She replied, with surprise, 'I received one but yesterday.' 'Then,' said the stranger, 'you have heard of Henry's death.' She had not heard of the meeting of the brothers. She had only heard of the conversion of the elder son. The announcement of Henry's death overcame her ; this beclouded all. 'My child is dead ; dead in sin against God, in a foreign land, and no one to speak

to him a word of divine truth, of mercy in a Saviour's love,' was her language. She retired, overwhelmed with sorrow ; she could not weep. She said afterwards, 'I could not pray. At last I opened the letters ; and when I saw the handwriting of my elder son, whose letter had given me so much comfort, I was confounded. As I read on, I found that the brothers had met ; that the elder had witnessed the last moments of the younger ; and that this, my second son, had been met by the missionaries, and turned from the error of his ways. O,' said she, 'it was indeed a cordial to my soul. How marvellous, that both my sons should be converted to God in a heathen land ! O, the twenty pounds, and the last declarations of my dying mother ! What blessings were hidden in that twenty pounds ! What do I owe her for that saying, " You will never have reason to repent of giving it to the Missionary Society." Could I have foreseen all this, what would I not have given ? '

" The influence of these occurrences in

confirming the faith and hope of this good woman may easily be imagined. She could not look back without astonishment at the dealings of God with herself and her children; and she could not recount these remarkable particulars without connecting them with the last solemn request of her pious mother. The honor of having two sons rescued in so remarkable a manner from the profligate and destructive courses into which they had entered, the distinguished honor of having one of them employed in the missionary work among the heathen, and the remarkable fact of having had them both rescued from vice and destruction by the friendly and pious labors of English missionaries, as well as the happiness of knowing that the one who was torn from her had experienced, in his last hours, every attention and solace that the affectionate hand of a brother could supply, — all these were so intimately connected with the legacy of her mother, and the almost prophetic words with which it was delivered, that she could not refrain from

considering the whole a singular fulfilment of prayers long since recorded on high, and as a singular illustration of the special providence of God toward his people."

A good man, after a short but brilliant career of usefulness, could say, on his death-bed, "I have been enabled, by the grace of God, to give forty thousand dollars to the cause of Christ." Money thus invested is safe, and will yield the highest profit and purest satisfaction for ever and ever. How much better it was for that good man, when about to give up his final account, to look back on a life of usefulness, than to have left this large amount of property to his children, to render them inefficient, and perhaps vicious, in this life; and destroy both soul and body in hell forever! With such piety and benevolence ever sympathize. It is best for men to be their own executors, and to have the satisfaction of doing good while they live. Do up your work for Christ as you pass along. Depend not on the future. You know not what a day may bring forth. Be not anxious to

who begins to walk ; perhaps fall ; but if he will soon be able to walk with the agility of a man. And so it is with every Christian. He must, while he is learning to pray, as he learns to walk, practice. The fear of falling is a snare ; and this can only be overcome by persevering effort.

The ability to pray is a gift given to yourself, and to those who will greatly promote your usefulness in the world. The ability to pray is a gift of God, which, like all other gifts, is to be practiced. Observe I Cor. 14: 26, and commit to memory the first and other portions of the chapter on devotion. Make them your daily study, and they will afford you much language in prayer. If you have a desire from above, an answer to your prayer, do not be wavering. God

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accumulate property for your children. If blessed with health, they will ordinarily succeed better without a patrimony than with it. Train them to habits of industry. Let them understand distinctly that they are not to depend on you for a support. Give them a good intellectual, moral, and domestic education, and send them abroad into the world to look out for themselves. Labor not to be rich, but to do good. "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." 1 Tim. 6 : 9. Gain what you can by honest industry, that, in addition to your own support, you may have something to give to the Lord. I will close this chapter with the apostolic injunction, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gathering when I come." 1 Cor. 16 : 2.

CHAPTER XI.

MISCELLANEOUS DIRECTIONS.

In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works. Titus 2:7.

It is not uncommon for young Christians to be thrown into darkness and doubt, and in this state to lose their religious enjoyment. Should this at any time be your experience, you must search for the cause. Perhaps you have neglected some duty, or committed sin, which you have not confessed, and of which you have not repented. Some sins we must confess to man as well as to God, in order to enjoy the light of his countenance. A lady once hopefully experienced religion, and for a season was favored with great enjoyment. But suddenly a dark cloud covered her spiritual horizon. She was greatly distressed; and while endeavoring to discover the cause of her darkness, she remembered that she had cherished such unkind feel-

ings toward a certain relative, that she had not spoken with him for two years. Presuming that this might be the cause of her trouble, she took the earliest opportunity to visit him, and in the spirit of the gospel confessed her sin. Light immediately broke in upon her mind, and she went on her way rejoicing.

A young convert once entered my room in apparent distress. "What is the matter?" I inquired. "I have lost my hope." "And what do you intend to do about it?" "I am resolved, with divine assistance, to give up my heart to Christ anew, and seek a better one." He did so, and was soon restored to his former comfort. If your darkness and doubt are attended with indifference, you have reason to fear that you are a stranger to experimental religion. But if they lead you to watch and pray more, to search your heart, and strive earnestly for the right way, they may be turned to an important account. Should you be unable, however, after proper examination, to discover the specific cause of

your darkness, you must continue instant in prayer till the cloud is removed. "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." Isa. 50: 10.

Young Christians sometimes bring darkness over their minds by comparing themselves with others. Their views are not so clear, nor their hopes so bright, nor their peace so abundant, as that of some others with whom they have conversed. They hastily conclude, therefore, that they have no religion. This course is neither scriptural nor safe. Others may express more than they feel; or their high joys and happy frames may all be spurious. "The heart is deceitful above all things." There is great variety in religious experience, although the views and feelings of real Christians are substantially the same. The Bible is the only safe standard with which to compare your religious emotions. This is unerring truth, and to this you

must always resort as the grand criterion of Christian character. "To the law and to the testimony : if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isa. 8: 20. If your views and feelings accord with the word of God, they are correct, whether they agree with the experience of others or not. "But they," says an apostle, "measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." 2 Cor. 10: 12.

Learn to govern your temper. This you will find a difficult task, and must therefore address yourself to the work in serious earnest. To get the mastery of one's self is a great attainment. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty ; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." Prov. 16: 32. If you are constitutionally passionate and irritable, you must watch and pray the more. When greatly provoked, as you may sometimes be, and find the gall stirred within, think of God and Jesus, and speak not till you can do it

with a heavenly smile. If you have wrong feelings, it is best to keep them within, that they may injure no one but yourself. In this way you may smother them, like a spark in the smoke, until they die. If you utter them, they will burst into a flame and do unspeakable mischief. One decisive victory over your temper will do much to secure another. Some one has remarked, I think, of Bishop Leighton, that he never saw him in any other temper than that in which he himself should wish to die.

If any one injures you, make it a standing rule to pray for that person in a special manner, till your own feelings are set right. Prayer has a wonderful power to subdue the spirit. "Love your enemies." Matt. 5 : 44. This is one of the hardest lessons for our fallen natures to learn. But this lesson, difficult as it is, you must and can learn, by the grace of God. Jesus loved his enemies, and you must possess his spirit, or never enter heaven. "Bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you

and persecute you." Matt. 5 : 44. O, lovely spirit ! Let it pervade your entire nature. It is the highest attainment of Christian piety, the spirit of God, the spirit of heaven.

Guard well your thoughts :

" Our thoughts are heard in heaven."

Let me entreat you also to govern your tongue. " If any man among you seem to be religious, and brideth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." James 1 : 26. " The tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Therewith bless we God, even the Father ; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God." James 3 : 5, 9. An unbridled " tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity ; it setteth on fire the course of nature ; and it is set on fire of hell." James 3 : 6. With such a member in motion, and a depraved heart within, we may well watch and pray lest we speak unadvisedly with our lips. A single unguarded expression from a professed Christian may do great evil. It may .

make a breach which years cannot heal. By it you may wound Christ in the house of his friends.

Guard against foolish talking and jesting. Remember that "every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." Matt. 12: 36. Never allow yourself to backbite, nor unnecessarily to wound the feelings of another. The direction of an apostle is, "Speak evil of no man." Titus 3: 2. If you can say nothing good about another, it is better, perhaps, to say nothing at all. Be tender of another's reputation. A man's character is his life. If you destroy that, you ruin him for the present world. Ever cherish a lively sense of the divine presence. That simple sentence, "Thou God seest me," ought to make us tremble and walk circumspectly.

It is important to know what and where you are. You must examine yourself, therefore, frequently and with great care. This may be done profitably at the close of each day, or week, or month, or year.

It is important, however, to watch our feelings and conduct under the irritations and crosses of life. Human nature will manifest itself here, if any where. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith ; prove your own selves." 2 Cor. 13 : 5. To make steady progress in the divine life, you must read the Bible daily, looking up to God for light and grace to understand its truths and feel their power. Commit the richer portions of it to memory. These will aid you in devotion, and afford themes for profitable meditation during the day. "Search the Scriptures," is the direction of our Saviour ; and the Psalmist says, "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." Ps. 119 : 11. The Bible is to be your daily counsellor in all matters of faith and practice. It will never deceive you. It speaks the truth, and the whole truth, pertaining to salvation, and nothing but the truth. All spiritual Christians love the Bible more and more as they get nearer to heaven. I once entered the room of a maniac who had been distin-

guished for piety. She seized my hand, and leading me to the table, took up her Bible, which lay upon it, and embracing it with a holy tenderness, exclaimed, in effect, "O this dear, this blessed Bible!" She had not lost her affection for the word of God, even amidst the obliquities of mental aberration.

If you feel indifferent to the Bible, you have reason to tremble. A neglected Bible is a sure token of a bad state of heart. Never allow any other book to withdraw your affections from the word of God. The course, in this particular, pursued by Henry Martyn, is well worthy of your imitation. "So deep was his veneration for the word of God," says his biographer, "that when a suspicion arose in his mind that any other book he might be studying was about to gain an undue influence over his affections, he instantly laid it aside; nor would he resume it till he had realized and felt the paramount excellence of the divine oracles." He could not rest satisfied till all those lesser lights which were begin-

ning to dazzle him, had disappeared before the effulgence of the Scriptures.

The frequent reading of devotional hymns, such as you find in Watts and Select, and other valuable collections, will greatly promote your piety. You ought also to have access to a well-conducted religious newspaper, and to some of the most valuable missionary periodicals. The reading of these publications will enlarge your views, and keep you acquainted with the religious movements of the day. If you are blessed with a family, it is immensely important that they also should have access to, and early acquire a taste for, such reading. The world is full of books : you must therefore select the best. Flavel's Fountain of Life is excellent ; it is a fountain of instruction. Baxter's Saints' Rest was written on the threshold of heaven, and breathes a celestial spirit. You cannot read it too much. For spirituality and real excellence, it stands next to the Bible. Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul is a standard book,

and should be read with care. Of memoirs, the Lives of Brainerd, Payson, J. B. Taylor, Harlan Page, and President Edwards, are among the most important. You must not read such books simply for amusement, but to be quickened in the divine life, and to learn from them, more perfectly, how to be eminently holy and useful. The faults of the great and good avoid, their excellences imitate. After you have gained a little strength, you will do well to read Edwards on the Affections. It is a searching book. It sweeps away the chaff from the wheat ; and, should it shake your religious hopes, it may lead you to dig deeper, and lay the foundation on a rock.

I must entreat you, moreover, to keep the Sabbath with great strictness. As holy time approaches, strive to get your mind into a spiritual frame. Finish your worldly business early on Saturday, and get your dress and food in readiness for the Sabbath. Never allow your children to go out for sport on Saturday evening. Teach them

to be serious as holy time approaches. You will do well to retire to rest in good season, that your exhausted powers may be refreshed for the Sabbath. Rise early, and commune with God. Partake sparingly of food, that all your powers may be vigorous for divine worship. Lay aside all your worldly plans and anxieties, and never speak or think about them on this sacred day. The command is, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." Ex. 20 : 8. God has hallowed it. On this day we are forbidden to do servile work, except so far as necessity and mercy require. Let the Sabbath be to you a day of great religious enjoyment. On it we should make more than ordinary advances toward heaven, of which it is an emblem. Let your reading on this day be strictly religious, and keep your mind, as much as possible, in a heavenly frame. Never allow yourself to visit or journey upon the Sabbath. On this point the views of many professed Christians need to be corrected.

Remember that a man was once stoned,

in the camp of Israel, for going out and gathering a few sticks upon the Sabbath. Num. 15: 36. This shows us, most impressively, with what sacredness God would have us regard his day. Let it be with you a settled principle, not to disturb the worship of others, nor dishonor God by entering his house late upon the Sabbath. To prevent this, get ready in season for the sanctuary, and go to that sacred place in silent prayer. Enter it immediately, and remember that God is there. If possible, commune with him a few moments in silence, before the public services commence. While there, let your whole soul be filled with God and heaven, and thus get a foretaste of your everlasting rest.

God has promised great blessings to those who sanctify his day. "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own

words ; — then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord ; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father ; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” Isa. 58 : 13, 14.

As you live in a world of sin, and must necessarily have intercourse with a variety of characters, select for your intimate associates the most spiritual believers. The influence of such will be decidedly favorable to your growth in grace. I have always found in the world three classes of Christians. The first follow the Saviour closely, and are constantly looking to him for light and salvation. These are benevolent, cheerful, and happy ; their consolations abound ; they walk in the light of God’s countenance ; they are favored with the Saviour’s presence, and share his benignant smiles. The second class follow Christ at a distance, and look at him only occasionally. These are much troubled with doubts and fears, and have but little religious enjoyment. The third class live

so far away from the Saviour that one would think they never saw him at all. In religion they are cold and distant. They have no spiritual enjoyment, and can scarcely tell whether they belong to Christ or Belial. If, then, you would be a happy and useful Christian, and have your path like the rising light, shining brighter and brighter until the perfect day, ever be found in this first class of believers. Sympathize with them, pray with them, ask their counsel, and cherish their devout and heavenly spirit.

In all your dealings with others, be strictly honest. Acquire for yourself a reputation of the strictest integrity. This will give you a vast influence over other minds, and secure the confidence of all. Never overreach or defraud your bitterest enemy. Reward his ill treatment with kindness and good-will. This will secure for you the approbation of conscience, and the favor of God. "If thine enemy hunger, feed him ; if he thirst, give him drink ; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his

head. Be not overcome of evil ; but overcome evil with good." Rom. 12 : 20, 21.

You will do well to remember, also, that time is a talent for which you must give account to God. Never lose or misspend an hour. Make the best of each moment as it passes : when once gone, it is gone forever. Be always doing something for the benefit of yourself or others. If you can do nothing else, you can pray. O the preciousness of time ! It will settle our destinies for eternity. Happy will it be for us, if at death we can say, "I have never lost an hour."

Let me add one thought more. Always have in your own mind some scriptural reasons why you believe that you are a child of God. This will lead you to self-inspection. The direction of an apostle is, "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." 1 Pet. 3 : 15. But do you ask, "What evidence, in respect to personal religion, may be regarded as satisfactory ?" I

will simply observe, that if you delight in the character of God as you see it in his works and word, and habitually choose him as your friend and portion ; if you rejoice in his government, and are willing to be disposed of according to his sovereign pleasure ; if with all your heart you love the Lord Jesus, and rely upon his atonement for acceptance with the Father ; if you approve the work of the Spirit, and cherish his gracious influences ; if you feel a strong aversion to sin in yourself and others, and desire to be delivered from its debasing power ; if you find a serious conflict within, the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh ; if you take pleasure in reading the Word of God, and desire complete conformity to its holy precepts ; if you find delight in the Sabbath, in secret, family, and social prayer, and are refreshed by the public services of God's house ; if you choose the people of God as your companions, and love those most who most resemble Christ ; if you habitually delight in holiness as you be-

hold it in God and Jesus, and desire above all things to be perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect ; and, finally, if you can say from the heart, “ Whereas I was once blind, now I see ; ” “ Old things are passed away ; behold, all things are become new ; ” “ I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me ; and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me ; ” — you have satisfactory evidence that you are a child of God, and may hope to be presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

CHAPTER XII.

A PUBLIC PROFESSION OF RELIGION.

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized ; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.
Acts 2: 41.

CHRIST has in the world a visible church, blessed with appropriate ordinances, and composed of such as hope that, by renewing grace, they have passed from death to life, and are travelling onward to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven. The church was first established in the family of Abraham, and has been preserved a distinct, visible body from that time to the present. To this church, of which Christ is the head, all experimental Christians should belong. They are required to come out from the world and be separate. “ Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing ; and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” 2 Cor. 6: 17, 18.

The language of Christ to all his followers is, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." Matt. 16 : 24. "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat ; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it ; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Matt. 26 : 26—28. In Luke it is added, "This do in remembrance of me." Luke 22 : 19. "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." 1 Cor. 11 : 26. These explicit commands make it your duty to connect yourself with Christ's visible church, and enter into solemn covenant with God and with his people. In this matter you are not to confer with flesh and blood. The will of Christ is to be your law. "If ye love me," says our Saviour, "keep my commandments ;" and his dying command is, "This do in remembrance of me." We

are accustomed to regard the dying request or injunction of a friend as peculiarly sacred. Most surely, then, the dying command of the Saviour ought to be obeyed.

You are to enter into covenant with God cheerfully, and with all your heart, to be his forever, and at the Lord's table to seal your consecration to Christ by partaking of the memorials of his body and blood. It is a great honor and privilege to profess our faith in Jesus. By this act we are brought into a near and peculiar relation to him as the Redeemer and Shepherd of his people. He is our great covenant head, and we are the "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." For all his faithful visible members he has a special regard. By this act we place ourselves under the watch and care of the church. As members of Christ's family, they are bound by solemn covenant engagements to look after us, to pray for us, to reprove us kindly when we need it, and to search us out, and do what they can to bring us back to the path of duty, when we wander from God.

This act of consecration will exert a happy influence on yourself. Having professed your faith in Christ, in the presence of God and many witnesses, you will feel yourself under greater obligations to watch and pray, and walk circumspectly. If faithful to your vows, you will remember that you are like a city set on a hill, and that the eye of the world is upon you. Your seasons of communion also, at the table of the Lord, will be refreshing. You will hail them with delight. Christ will commune with you, and manifest himself to your soul, in the breaking of bread. With a heart broken for sin, and grateful for redeeming mercy, you will contemplate with lively emotions your great High Priest, his amazing love for you, his sufferings and death, his resurrection and ascension to glory, and what he is now doing as your intercessor at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Do you ask how long you should wait before you connect yourself with the visible church? To this no definite answer

can be given. It is well to take a suitable time for self-examination. The heart is deceitful. Three months, perhaps, is a proper medium. Some may be admitted earlier, while others may think proper to wait a longer period. There are various operations by the same Spirit. Some gain as satisfactory evidence of a change of heart in one week, as others do in six months or a year. In a matter so momentous, it is not best to be hasty; while, on the other hand, you must not wait too long. There is nothing gained by neglecting duty, when duty is made plain. You are not to make your calculations to go back, nor be afraid to do right, lest you should do wrong. Doubts and fears, weakness of faith, and the withdrawal of the Saviour's presence, are the results of waiting too long. If, after a proper time for self-examination and prayer, you decidedly and heartily choose Christ as your Saviour, and are determined by his grace to follow him, go forward and profess religion. In this matter you must act upon what is called

comfortable evidence. If you tremble, trust in Christ, and do your duty. If you wait for perfection, or the full assurance of hope, before you profess religion, you will not profess it at all.

It is not the amount but the kind of evidence which should satisfy you. Be thankful for a little that is genuine, act in view of it, and ask for more. We can obtain the highest and best evidence of Christian piety, only in the path of duty; and this comes, not like a flash of lightning, but as the rising light, shining brighter and brighter until the perfect day. “Then shall ye know, if ye follow on to know the Lord.” His goings forth are as the morning—a little light first, then more and more, till the full-orbed Sun of righteousness pours upon the soul the splendors of meridian day. You will observe, however, that this strong light, or evidence, rises in the soul only while following on to know the Lord. Maturity of Christian character is not obtained in a day. If you possess the form and features of a

new-born soul, you will, by feeding constantly upon the sincere milk of the word, arrive ultimately to a perfect man, "to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

Do you ask again why you cannot enjoy religion as well out of the church as in it? Simply, because you are not in the path of duty. You are habitually disobeying Christ, and slighting one of the most precious institutions in his word. From all such he withdraws in a measure his comforting and gracious presence. You will find no scriptural consolation in disobedience. It is an insult offered to the Most High, to think or to feel it to be a matter of indifference, whether you do or do not publicly profess your faith in Jesus. God had a great and a good reason for establishing a church in our world, and for the same reason he requires you to enter it as an humble disciple, and to honor him by a pious, consistent life, as one of its visible members. "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken, than the fat of rams"

CHAPTER XIII.

CONCLUSION.

"LET us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Fear God, and keep his commandments ; for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil." Eccl. 12 : 13, 14. Presuming that you have felt in a measure the force of the preceding considerations, I shall address you, in my remaining remarks, as a member of the visible church. In what I have just said, I have not, I hope, given an undue prominence to a profession of religion. That, indeed, is an important duty, but by no means all, nor even the most essential thing, which God requires of his believing people.

You are now to adorn your profession of godliness by a life of eminent piety.

The apostle Peter, speaking of believers, says, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." 1 Pet. 2: 9. You see in this description what elevated ground you have taken, and to what a dignified, noble calling you are raised by heartily espousing the cause of Jesus, and avouching the Lord Jehovah to be your God. To the church of Christ generally, and particularly to that branch of it with which you are connected, you sustain a most interesting relation. Out of this relation grow important duties.

You are to love the church as the body of Christ, and to strive earnestly for her peace, edification, and enlargement. Her seasons of communion, and meetings for prayer and mutual instruction, you are bound to attend. With her poor and afflicted members you should deeply sympathize, and do what you can to relieve and comfort them. We are required to

"bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." Gal. 6 : 2. In the day of judgment our Saviour will say to his faithful ones, "For I was a hungered, and ye gave me meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink ; I was a stranger, and ye took me in ; naked, and ye clothed me ; I was sick, and ye visited me ; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Matt. 25 : 35, 36, 40.

Be careful never to appear cold or distant towards the most illiterate and obscure of the flock. Remember that they are your brethren in Christ, and have sensibilities as well as you. They are precious in the sight of the Lord ; his elect, in whom his soul delighteth. "He that despiseth you, despiseth me ; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me," is the solemn declaration of our Saviour. When inclined to feel above your brethren, look at Jesus washing his disciples' feet, and learn from it a lesson of humility. As

members of the church of Christ, we are not to suffer sin in a brother unrebuked. To do this, however, in the right spirit, requires no ordinary share of wisdom and grace. When it becomes your painful duty to administer reproof to an offending member, be careful to do it in the spirit of meekness and love, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Never undertake such a duty without asking counsel of God, nor until your own soul is thoroughly imbued with the spirit of Jesus.

Reproof administered in a haughty, unkind, magisterial spirit, will only awaken unhallowed feelings, and widen the breach you are attempting to heal. In all such cases, we shall do well to remember the apostolic injunction: "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." 2 Tim. 2 : 25. Never allow yourself to publish the faults or sins of your brethren to other members of the church, or to individuals out of it. This is both unscriptu-

ral and unkind, and productive of unspeakable mischief. If you see a brother in fault, adhere closely to the instructions given by our Saviour : "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." Matt. 18: 15. Pursuing this course in humility and meekness, and with Christian fidelity, you may expect the divine blessing.

If at any time you are left to wander from the path of duty, and are admonished of it, receive the admonition with Christian kindness, and be thankful for it. "Let the righteous smite me ; it shall be a kindness : and let him reprove me ; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head." Ps. 141 : 5. When we err from the way of life, we should esteem it a great favor to be reminded of it, and set right again. You will find it quite as difficult, however, to receive admonition in a proper spirit, as to give it.

Treat your minister with great kindness, and esteem him very highly in love for his work's sake. His labor is hard and diffi-

cult ; he needs your sympathies. Bear with his infirmities ; for these you may expect him to have. Contribute liberally for his support, remembering that "the laborer is worthy of his hire." We are richer and happier to support the gospel, than we should be to live without it, or have it given us. Men value that which costs them something. Encourage your minister in his work, and stay up his hands in his efforts to do good. If you wish him to be eminently spiritual, be eminently spiritual yourself. If he is very faithful, love him the more. Remember that one real godly member in a church is a great comfort to a minister. Coldness in your heart will chill the vital current of piety in his own bosom. If you wish for sermons rich in thought and holy feeling, carry your minister in your prayers daily, and often, to the mercy-seat ; and if he be a good man you may expect him to return to you laden with the treasures of heavenly truth.

Love ardently all the great doctrines of

grace revealed in the Bible. These are the bone and nerve of vigorous piety. You must not live on past experience. What you felt yesterday must not satisfy you to-day. The manna which comes from heaven, and feeds the soul, must be gathered daily. You are to have fresh and deeper experience in the things of religion. There are heights in the love of God which you have not yet reached, and depths in redeeming grace which you have not yet explored. We have no instructions in the Bible to stand still or go back. When the Christian is addressed, it is all intensity : "Strive to enter in at the straight gate ;" "Fight the good fight of faith ;" "Lay hold on eternal life ;" "Press toward the mark ;" "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure." Your course is to be steady, like the sun, upward and onward to meridian day. There is, to be sure, a healthful variety in religious experience. There is not always the same intensity of feeling in prayer, nor the same degree of joy, peace, or triumph in be-

lieving. These, in a living Christian, are happily blended. Variety affords relief, and augments enjoyment, if not produced by stupidity, indifference, or unbelief.

We may have in religion the freshness and beauty of spring, the growth and vigor of summer, and the rich harvest of autumn ; but, beneath the Sun of righteousness, we ought not to have the coldness and sterility of winter.

It can hardly be necessary for me to add, that you have entered God's spiritual kingdom at a remarkable period. You stand on the eve of great events. The elements of life and death are in motion ; the foundations of many generations are breaking up ; the angel having the everlasting gospel to preach to all the nations, is on the wing. There is to be a mighty struggle between the powers of light and the powers of darkness ; Satan is mustering his forces for the final conflict. The work to be done, and the events before you, require that your piety should be of the highest order. Be not satisfied with the

attainments of professors around you. The standard of holy living in the church is vastly too low. Do what you can to raise it. Be eminently a man of God. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant." Eminence in piety can be attained only by unremitted and vigorous effort. This is within your reach. You may and ought to be a growing, happy, and useful Christian. Prepare for conflict; hold fast to the truth; put on Christ daily; and you will shine as a light in the world. "Take, my brethren, the prophets" and apostles "who have spoken unto you in the name of the Lord," for examples of patience, suffering afflictions. Their abhorrence of sin, their deep humility and deadness to the world, their fervent devotion, their hungerings and thirstings after righteousness, and their longings for perfect holiness, you can and ought to imitate. Enoch walked with God, and so may you; Jacob wrestled with the angel of the covenant, and prevailed, and so may you.

The Psalmist could say, "My soul thirsteth for God. O, how love I thy law ! Thy word is sweet to my taste ; yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth. My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord. O, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together." Such should be your experience. Daniel was a man greatly beloved of God. You also should be a beloved disciple. To have an angel say of you, "O man, greatly beloved," is an honor, compared with which

"The laurels that a Caesar reaps are weeds."

Rest not until you can, with Peter, appeal to the omniscient Jesus, and say, "Lord, thou knowest all things ; thou knowest that I love thee ;" and with Paul, "I know in whom I have believed. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

It is a great mistake to suppose that we cannot live as near to God, and be as holy and heavenly-minded, as the saints spoken of in the Bible. They were sinners like ourselves, saved only by grace, through the atoning blood of Jesus. That blood

is no less available for us than for them. We have the same God and Saviour to go to, and are blest with far higher privileges than they. We ought to look above, and reach beyond them, even to the perfect example of our Lord Jesus Christ. Exercise, then, their self-denial and faith in God, and you will experience their peace, joy, and triumph. Let it be deeply impressed upon your heart, that true religion consists very much in penitence and humility. The lower you sink in the depths of humiliation, the higher you will rise in moral excellence. "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Ps. 51 : 17. "Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly." Ps. 138 : 6. "He dwells with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Is. 57 : 15. When severely tried, be patient and submissive, remembering that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Heb,

12 : 6. Trials are profitable. They are the sounding-lines of the soul, to show us the depth, or rather the shallowness, of our piety. Great attainments in holiness are rarely made without them. They drive us to God ; they bring out and render more vigorous the Christian graces. Those whose religious characters have shone with the greatest brilliancy and power, have been inured to conflicts. Abraham was severely tried, but God sustained him ; and his trial has given to the world an illustration of the power of his faith.

Those remarkable persons spoken of in Hebrews 11, were torn, were sawn asunder, were slain with the sword. They were persecuted, afflicted, tormented. They wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, and dwelt in dens and caves of the earth. Few, if any, have made higher attainments in holiness than the apostle Paul, and none, perhaps, have passed through greater tribulations. Luther and Calvin were always in the furnace. Under these circumstances their piety was nurtured, and reached uncommon maturity.

In deep personal affliction be quiet, and say, with Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Job 1 : 21. Our heavenly Father chastens us for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness. Heb. 12 : 10. He corrects us in love, and pities while he smites. "Like as a father pitieith his children, so the Lord pitieith them that fear him." Ps. 103 : 13. Of ancient Israel it is said, "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old." Is. 63 : 9.

Never murmur at the allotments of Providence. If by grace you are made an heir of God, and are passing on to a "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," you ought not to complain. Nothing surely can be lost, if heaven be gained. Never indulge in gloom or melancholy. These belong not to the religion of Jesus. Be a contented Christian. "Godliness,

with contentment, is great gain." "I have learned," says an apostle, "in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." 1 Tim. 4:8. Be a joyful Christian. If redeemed by the blood of Jesus, and saved by grace, you have abundant occasion for holy joy. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." "Rejoice evermore." "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, rejoice." To encourage and stimulate you in your upward career, think often of heavenly scenes. Go up to the eternal city, and survey its walls and gates, and streets of gold; gaze upon its endless glories; bathe in its spirit; drink in its celestial delights; converse with principalities and powers in heavenly places; listen to their songs of praise; contemplate the Lamb in the midst of the throne, until the attractions of earth lose their power, and God and Jesus be all in all.

Though much more might be said on

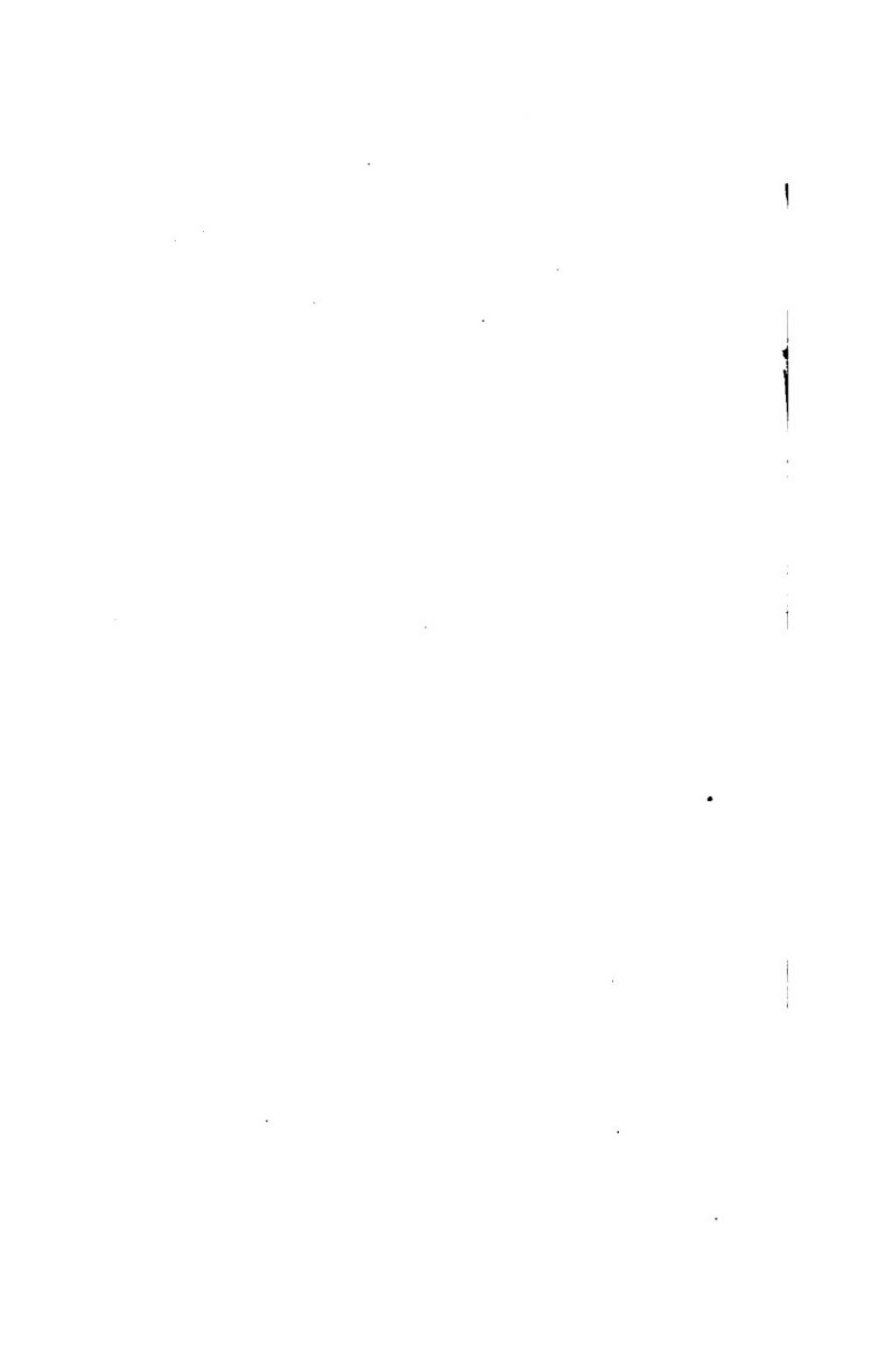
this subject, I must now bring my remarks to a close. I have written a book as large, probably, as you will be willing to read. My object has been to instruct, rather than to amuse. If you follow the directions already given, you will be a happy and useful Christian ; you will be able to "comprehend with all saints, what is the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of the love of Christ," and be filled at last "with all the fulness of God."

"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

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